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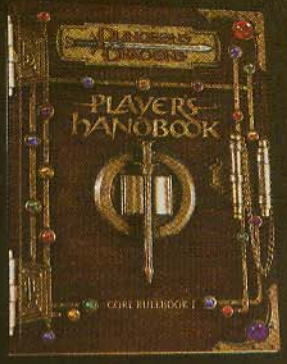

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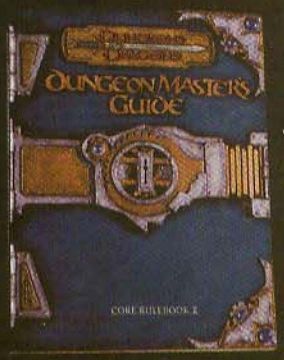

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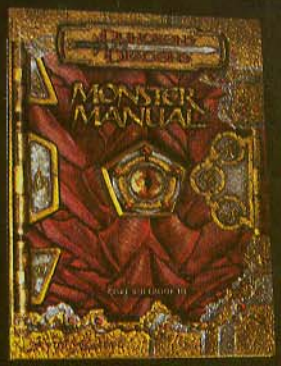

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Dragon Magazine 274
Volume XXV, Number 2
August 2000

The New Dungeons & Dragons

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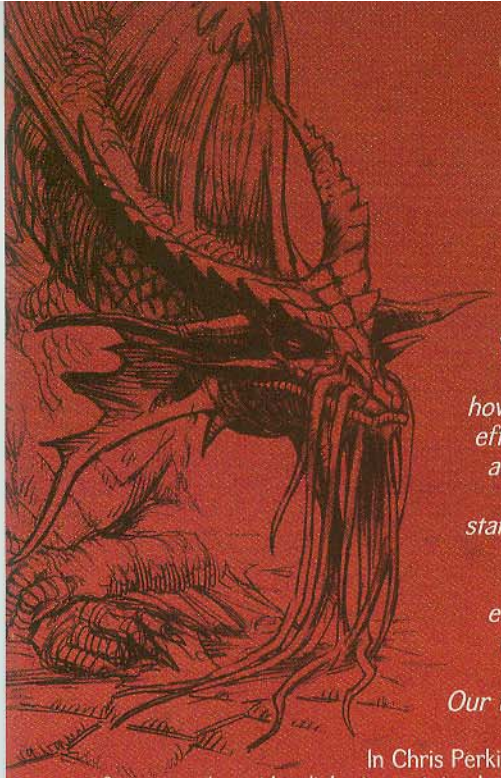
Cover artist Marc Sasso continues to refine his paintings after they've gone to print. Days after receiving the beautiful gold dragon on the cover, he called to mention that he'd made some improvements and asked if we were interested. That second version, which includes skulls and dice in the background, is what you see here.

—Peter Whitley



Let the Games Begin

You can measure the success of the new D&D game by at least two standards: how well it pleases veteran gamers and how effectively it attracts new players. The halls at Wizards of the Coast are already abuzz with excitement from all the gamers who started new campaigns in the past year, and playtester feedback has been extremely positive. Still, we wondered whether our excitement was exaggerated by our hopes that it will sell millions. Maybe we weren't being critical enough, we worried. Our fears were put to rest a few months ago.

In Chris Perkins' Arveniar campaign, we found ourselves in a furious melee with a lightning-spitting behir. The fight soon turned against us as the blue lizard gobbled up Jeff's elf barbarian, Sevet, then used the formidable Cleave feat (that's right—the monsters get feats, too) to do the same to Droo, Sean's dwarf fighter. In a single round, our two toughest combatants were in the belly of the beast.

"Hey!" protested another player. "How many can that thing fit in there?"

Chris glanced at the manuscript of the *Monster Manual* and replied, "Two Medium-size creatures."

We were floored—not because our buddies were tucked snugly inside the monster's belly, but because there was a rule for how much room it had in its gut!

A round later, Sevet used a magic item to teleport out of the behir's gullet, but Droo had to cut his way out. Fortunately, he had a knife built into his prosthetic arm. (Long story.)

"So," asked Sean, "how much damage to cut my way free?"

"Twenty-five points," replied Chris, looking up from the *Monster Manual* again.

Despite the fact that the behir had mopped the floor with us, we were delighted to find out there was a rule that answered the question we'd just asked. The game is definitely working for veterans who fondly remember learning the rules the first time.

New and better rules aren't all the new D&D is about, of course. Bringing new blood to the game is even more important, and we have some good news on that front, too. Along with the veteran gamers, we also have a novice in our game.

Lizz created Tryant, a gnome rogue, then spent her first few sessions as quiet as a mouse. She never ventured to speak in character, and most of her actions were to imitate Stan's gnome rogue, Herumann, and hide the moment hostilities broke out.

Sadly, Tryant met her end in the jaws of the white dragon Icerazor. Fortunately, one of the group's NPC companions was a sapromneme, the flying fungal ghost of a dwarven warrior. The sapromneme, Harla, was best known for floating around Droo, whom she adored, cooing in her inimitable accent, "Oooooh, Drrooo!" Her affections never failed to make Sean turn red and the rest of us laugh soda out our noses.

After the ill-fated battle, the spirit of Tryant rose from a patch of spores that Harla had dropped in all the excitement. Now we had two flying mushroom characters. Better yet, Lizz had a hook on which to hang her characterization of the new, fungal incarnation of Tryant: "Oooooh, Herooooomaaann!" (Apparently, becoming a sapromneme makes you quite amorous.)

Before the rest of us could wipe our eyes from laughing at Stan's deep blush, we all realized that Lizz had become a full-fledged gamer. All rules aside, the D&D game had claimed another devoted player.

By the time you read these words, chances are that you'll soon try the new game for yourself. After that first session, take a few minutes to share your experiences with us, whether you're a veteran leaping once more into the fray or a new player just now learning what's so great about this DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game.

Dave Gross • Editor-in-Chief

DRAGON

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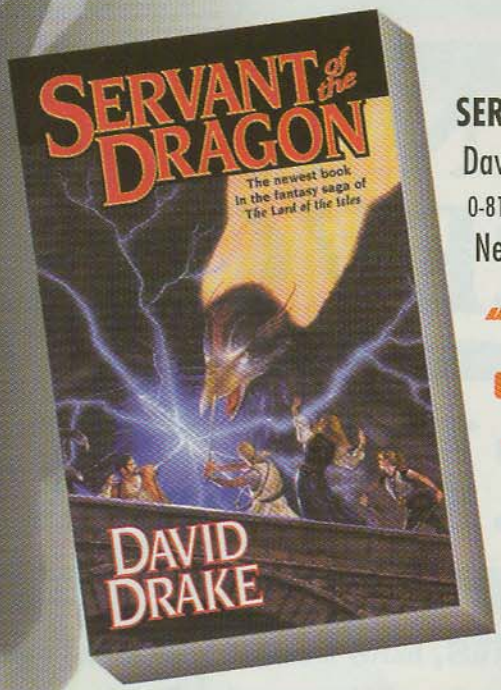

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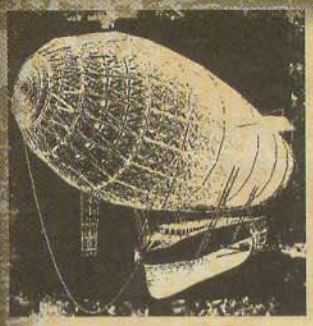

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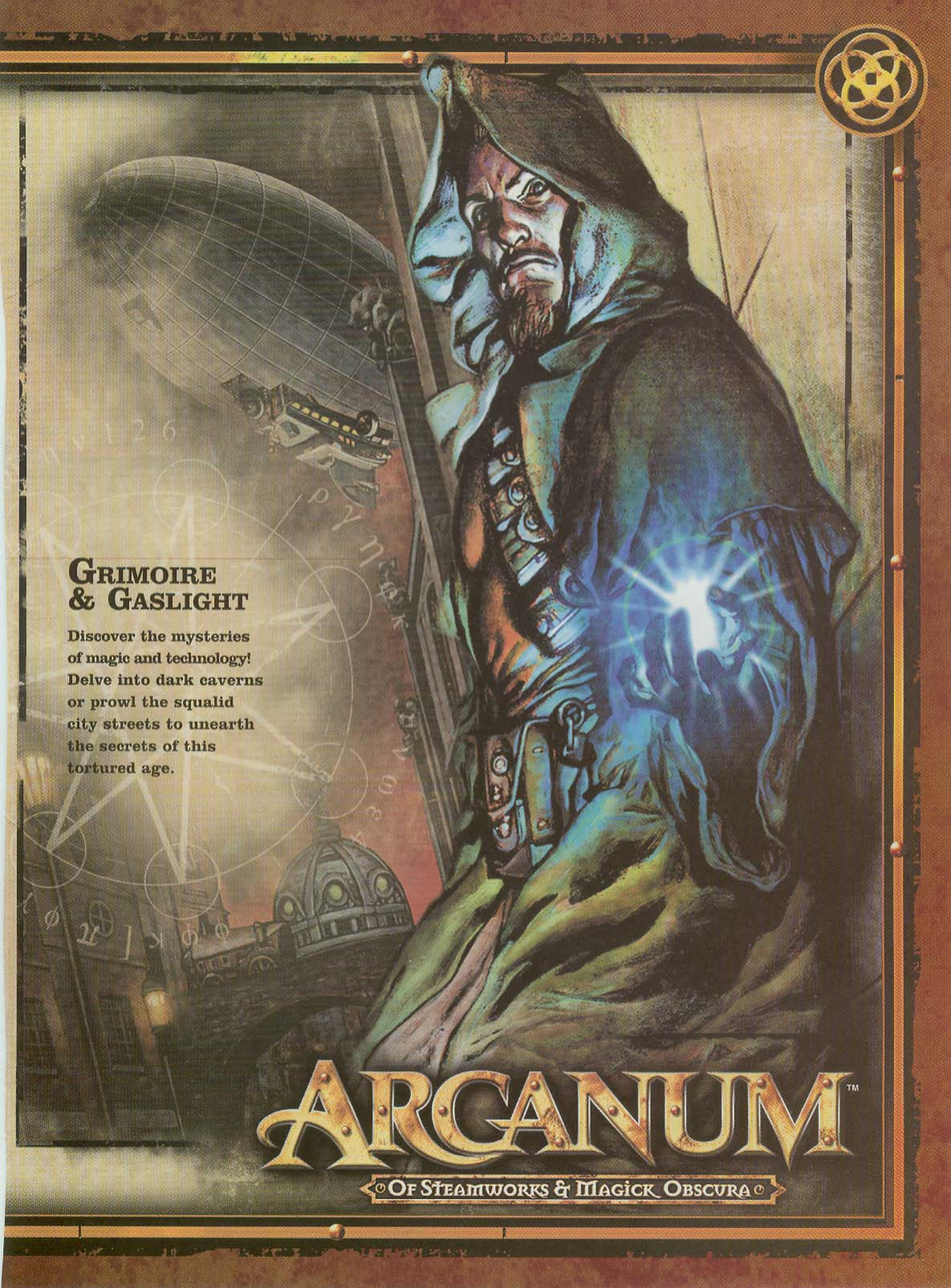
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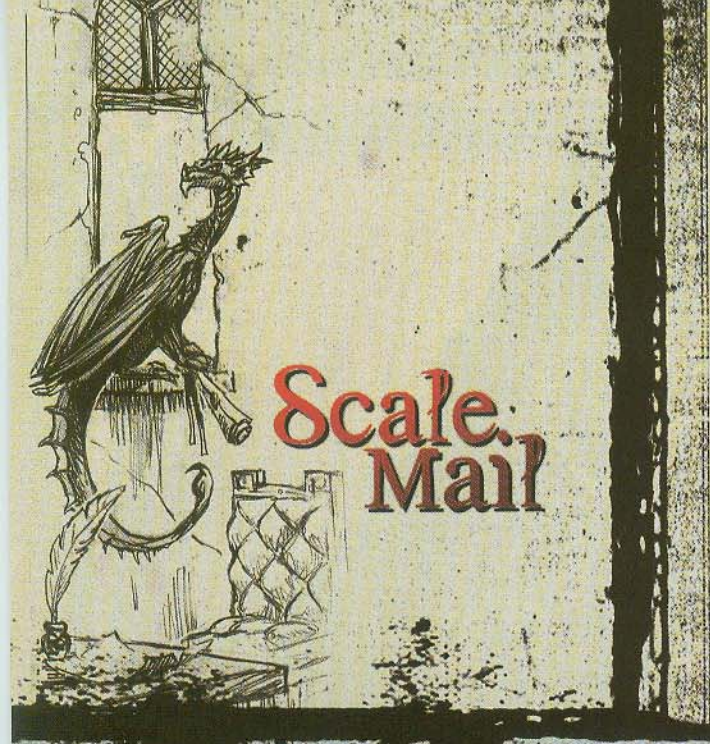

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Upon a Soapbox

The Perfect DM

By Gary Gygax

Let us get something straight immediately: There is no such thing as a perfect Dungeon Master. There are great ones, good ones, and so on down the line, but there is no DM so skilled as to need no improvement. In fact, repetition and inertia can combine to cause a DM to regress.

How to become a better DM is the key question, but avoiding slipping downward is a secondary consideration. How often have you heard a DM bemoan the fact that the group has disintegrated and a new one can't be organized? At least some instances of this must relate to the DM's fading zest for the role he plays, and with that inevitably comes a lowering of skill in presenting the fantastic environment in a way that captures the minds of the players.

There are several different aspects to the well-rounded roleplaying game:

- **character assumption and portrayal**
- **confrontation and combat**
- **economics and commerce**
- **exploration and discovery**
- **personal relations and politics**
- **problem solving and puzzles.**

I believe that runs the gamut, and surely no DM earns an A in all. Of course, the players influence the proportion of each aspect in the campaign, but if the DM is very capable, any aspect is likely to be well received, even by those players otherwise reluctant to stray from their "preferred" mode, be that action-based or histrionic.

Furthermore, we all need to refresh our minds to maintain our skills. Not only DMs grow lazy. Players also slip, often taking their cue from the DM. To assure top-flight performance, the DM must consider the adventures and think about the manner in which he presents them. For example, poor roleplaying can usually be laid squarely on the doorstep of the DM. If the NPCs are presented dramatically, how can players fail a like enactment when their PCs take stage center? In like vein, combat that consists of nothing more than dice rolling is dull in the extreme, and the DM surely needs to dramatize and enliven it.

We all can learn from many sources, including the players. By watching other DMs at work, we can learn what we are doing right, need improvement in, or just not doing at all. Observing players tells a lot about the DM also. If they are eager, attentive, and "in character" much of the time, you can bet that the DM is doing a good job.

To stay at peak level, the DM must first really love the game. **The wise DM listens attentively to players' suggestions—and complaints.** While some are not germane, or some players are just grousing because something went awry for the PCs, many a good idea can come from the players who know your DMing intimately.

The DM should also periodically re-read the rules. In this regard, I was quite taken aback after reading the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* for the new D&D game. Quite candidly, it is a marvelous tutorial for the DM, and I realized how much I had forgotten in presenting play sessions. Although it is primarily centered on dungeon adventures, there is also valuable information on other aspects of the DM's role. It is a work that all DMs

Master of the Game

I'd like to start by mentioning how much I appreciate the previews *Dragon* has provided of the new edition of the D&D rules. As I read them, however, I can't help but notice how many of the changes being made are similar or identical to house rules I implemented years ago. **It seems to me that a whole lot of R&D and playtesting time could have been saved if Wizards of the Coast had just consulted me on the 3rd Edition project.** To avoid making the same mistake twice, and to ensure that Wizards of the Coast is on the cutting edge of gaming evolution, it is clear that the company really has no alternative but to hire me into an influential position in their game design department.

As far as my resumé goes, in issue #272, Ray Winninger states in "Dungeoncraft" that, "Unless you are one of the best eight or ten DMs ever to grace the gaming tables, don't even think about running a game without a prepared description of the adventure you are undertaking." I'm happy to include myself in the Dungeon Master elite, then. For a period of two and a half years, I ran a game on a weekly or semi-weekly basis with no more preparation than a blank legal pad, a pencil, and a box of dice. The adventures I crafted are still admired today, eight years after I adopted a "prepare beforehand" policy. I'll be happy to furnish references to the appropriate persons.

I'm happy to include myself in the Dungeon Master elite...I ran a game [for years] with no more preparation than a blank legal pad, a pencil, and a box of dice.

In all seriousness, how about coming up with a recurring article that publishes a castle, dungeon, or tomb floor plan with traps and a backstory, but lets the DM populate it with creatures appropriate to his campaign or party? Also, a good article on castle or temple construction and costs would be appreciated. (The *Castle Guide* system is a little too cumbersome, I feel.) The article should address the cost of magical effects that adventurers would likely wish to include in their constructions, as well as the use of magic in the construction process.

Harry Pratt • Bloomington, IL

As the primary conduit between the designers and the fans, we feel it's our duty to set the R&D department straight when they make such egregious oversights as not hiring Harry earlier. Show your support now by writing a letter to ***"Harry Pratt for Lead Designer of 4th Edition, c/o Scale Mail,"*** *and we'll march the whole stack over to R&D.*

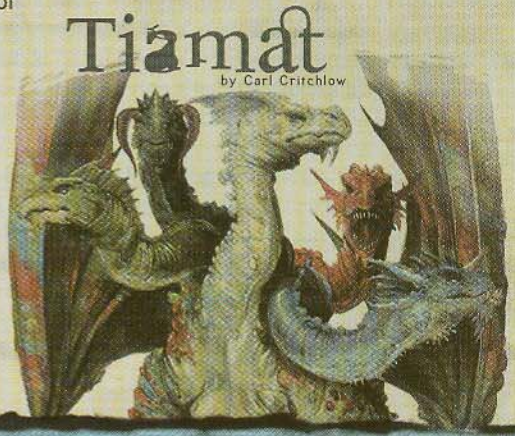
For castle, dungeon, and tomb floor plans, check out "Maps of Mystery," currently running in most issues of our sister publication, Dungeon Magazine. *We're also reviewing articles on castle construction for next summer, so stay tuned.*

The Trouble with Tiamat

I don't know who came up with the Tiamat art in the issue of *Dragon* I just got in the mail (#272). Whoever did that picture needs to find a good picture of her to see how wrong he is. **Her heads go (from left to right): black, blue, red, green, white.** Tiamat has always been one of the most feared dragons ever, and that artist messed her up so bad it's not funny. To look at that picture ... just ... oh, man, it's just not right at all!

Dowell Darlington • Windham, OH

After asking all the local experts, we still haven't gotten a better response than "Huh?" to the question of whether there's an "official order" to Tiamat's five heads. Since you're clearly the expert on chromatic dragon queen head placement, Dowell, we've put in a recommendation that R&D snap you up as ***Monster Continuity Expert*** *at the same time they make Harry the Lead Designer on 4th Edition.*



should have, read, and re-read whenever they feel a bit unsure of how well they are managing their campaign.

Besides observing other DMs and their players, it is a good idea to discuss DMing with others who do so. This can be done in person or online. As more and more roleplaying activity appears on the Internet, this is a great source for such discussions—typically on chat lists such as ADND or GREYTALK, as well as for gaming magazines that deal with how to be a better DM. As a case in point, I recently was sent a sample of a free e-zine, a short weekly publication. After reading it, I immediately subscribed and sent word to comrades about it. The publication in question is *Roleplaying Tips Weekly E-Zine*, and Issue #11 provided the "Top 5 Ways to More Compelling Encounters." You can find out for yourselves about this dandy little e-zine by emailing **subscribe@roleplayingtips.com**.

It goes without saying that you have in hand the top periodical source for what it takes to be an excellent DM. (This too is an unsolicited plug. Ye Kindly Editor has not threatened me so much as once ... to this time.) Because it is for all participants of the roleplaying game, though, and likely time is precious, be sure to read the material pertaining to DMing first! Reading, thinking, and planning are all necessary to maintaining your ability as a DM.

But even that won't make you a perfect DM. It is the striving that just might make you a really great DM, one to whom people look with admiration and respect. Now that's worthwhile, and something I too need to strive for.

Next issue is another surprise, so you'll have to wait to discover what the topic will be. Speculation that I have not yet written the column is entirely unfounded!

Tiamat Typo

I just received the June, 2000 issue a couple of hours ago. I wanted to let you know that **there is a typo** in the description of Tiamat. In her magic items list, there is written "*portable hole* +5". I know nearly nothing of the new edition of the rules, but I'm guessing that the "+5" was intended to precede the *ring of deflection* rather than being a property of the *portable hole*. The article was well-written, which makes me even more hopeful about the writing in the new *Monster Manual*.

Tiamat's *corrupt water* ability is far too limited

I noted that in nearly every respect, Bahamut is more powerful than Tiamat. One notable exception is that her spell-like abilities have a DC modifier of 19, while those of Bahamut have a DC of 14. Was this really intended? Of course, there is no reason for every property of Tiamat to be weaker than Bahamut's, but I just thought I would bring it up, since it was such a glaring difference.

On a personal-input note, Tiamat's *corrupt water* ability is far too limited with regard to volume affected. Tiamat, not only Colossal but near-divine, should be easily able to corrupt an entire lake per day, not just a barrel-worth of water. Besides that, the article was really wonderful.

Jean-Philippe Suter • Randolph, NJ

We showed your letter to Skip Williams, in his three-headed role as Sage, the article's author, and the lead designer of the upcoming new Monster Manual.

The +5 definitely belongs with the ring, not the portable hole. *Also, Skip reports: "The correct save DC for a spell-like ability is 10 + Charisma mod + spell level, so Bahamut's spell-like abilities should have a saving throw DC of 22 + spell level, not 14. The correct saving throw DC for Tiamat's abilities is still 19.*

"The corrupt water *ability is derived from the as-yet-unpublished black dragon description; she has it because she is a dragon, not because she is a deity. The same can be said for all Tiamat's and Bahamut's abilities—the article doesn't even begin to explore the pair's abilities as deities."*

Speaking of Tiamat and Bahamut as deities, maybe we can twist Skip's arm for a sequel next year, one that shows the king and queen of dragons in their full divine and infernal glory. If you'd like to see that article, write us a note. We'll add them to the stack of votes for hiring Harry and Dowell, and paper-mâché Skip into his cube if he doesn't agree.

Jolly Good Show, Old Chap

I just thought I'd drop a line to praise Kevin N. Haw's "The Ecology of the Bag of Devouring" from issue #271.

First of all, the choice of monster was excellent! It's hard enough writing an "Ecology" article when there's a *Monstrous Manual* or *Monstrous Compendium* listing providing a bunch of "known facts" about the creature in question. To do an "Ecology" on a monster that's only been mentioned in passing before was **a stroke of genius!** The fact that this was Mr. Haw's first "Ecology" makes it that much more impressive.

I enjoyed the story as much as I did the fleshing out of the devourer. The creature's anatomy was very logical, given what little we already knew about the beast. (Although personally, I'm not too sure about the eyeballs in the interior of its stomach cavity, but you never know.) The diagrams were nicely rendered; kudos to artist Corey Macourek, as well. Perhaps the only thing missing was a *Monstrous Compendium*-style listing of the devourer's stats, although much of this can be derived from the article itself.

All in all, an excellent "Ecology" article. I hope we'll see more of Mr. Haw in the future.

Johnathan Richards • Bellevue, NE

Kevin already has a second article proposal under review, and we're sure that "The Ecology of a Bag of Devouring" was ***only the first of many fine contributions to come.*** *In other words, Johnathan, you've got competition!*

Not to be outdone by a talented upstart, Johnathan tackles a new monstrous creation of the D&D game in next month's "Ecology of the Darkmantle." For the creature's statistics, you'll have to wait just a little longer, as it makes its first appearance in the new Monster Manual, *available in October.*

Profiles

JONATHAN TWEET brings not only dignity and respect to the table, but also a career in game design that began over two decades ago when his father, a college professor, gave him his first Dungeons & Dragons game for Christmas. Jonathan played briefly with some college kids ("but the DM killed me off," he says matter-of-factly, "because he didn't want a twelve-year-old in his group") before forming his own gaming group by recruiting kids in his class. "I've probably gamemastered more than I've played overall," he says when thinking about his roleplaying experiences. "I'm not sure I prefer it, but at least if I'm the gamemaster, I know there's going to be a good gamemaster. When I'm a player, I can't be so sure."

Making Magica

In Jonathan's case, being a good gamemaster almost inevitably led to being a good game designer. All three of the major roleplaying games that he's designed have been distinctly creative. The first, Ars Magica (1987), was a numbers-heavy game centered around wizards in the Middle Ages. Coming up with an entirely new system didn't strike Jonathan as particularly difficult at the time. "When

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Lord Gygax

I'm a loyal subscriber, and I would like to make two statements with this letter.

First, I want to **congratulate Gary Gygax** (who I believe should be called Lord Gygax) on his new column! I have rarely seen parts of the magazine deal with such substantive issues, and in such a blunt, effective way. The work is a tribute to Lord Gygax's ability as a writer, and it gives the magazine a new level of sophistication—one which I believe had been lacking.

I have rarely seen [*Dragon*] deal with such substantive issues, and in such a blunt, effective way.

Second, I would like to appeal to you, Dave Gross, to write an article in *Dragon* that describes **how you will convert an Al-Qadim campaign in accordance with the new edition.** I recall reading that this would be one of your own objectives; since a friend of mine has trepidations about doing that same thing, it would be a good article to read. I know it might take some time for you to complete your work, but even that could be seen as a test of the ease with which a campaign can be converted.

Edward Geraci • Chicago, IL

While it's great to read a request for an article from Dave, we can do better than that. Consider an **Arabian Adventures** ***article from one of our talented freelancers penciled in for publication sometime next year.*** *In the meantime, check out the all-new "Campaign Classics" starting next issue, including some great adventure hooks for the Land of Fate.*

I started roleplaying, there was very little support for the D&D game. Instead, [there were lots] of other games—Tunnels and Trolls and RuneQuest, for example—so you would find more games than supplements in stores. If you wanted to try something new, you had to buy another game. So it took no effort at all for me to separate myself from the games I already knew when it came time to design."

Pushing the Edge

Jonathan's second game, Over the Edge (1992), was radically different from Ars Magica. This game used free-form rules and a subjective approach all around. Characters didn't have ability scores like Strength, Intelligence, and so forth; instead, players defined their characters by a small number of traits, "the way you might define a character in a film or a novel," Jonathan explains. "Instead of detailing every characteristic, you just focus on what makes that character different." The game's setting was modern, but with weird elements to give it a surreal feeling.

Jonathan concedes that he created the game only for himself (as gamemaster, of course) to play with a few friends. It was intended to be too weird and obscene for publication. "John Nephew at Atlas Games heard about it," Jonathan explains, "and said that it was exactly the sort of thing he wanted to publish. I tried to talk him out of it ... but I failed."

Back to the Future of Games

Jonathan sees a bright future ahead for roleplaying; it's certainly come a long way from when he was a child. "Back then, roleplaying had boomed into a fad, and suddenly kids were doing things that their parents didn't understand. Anyone could tell them that their kids were in danger, and they'd pay attention."

Jonathan feels that the current generation of parents, either being players themselves or knowing players with whom they grew up, are more comfortable with roleplaying. Additionally, computer games that encourage players to "pretend" in fictional settings against imaginary creatures are now commonplace.

"And though I think it's a hard sell," he says, "I think what Pokémon is doing is teaching a whole generation of kids that you can have fun imagining you're having battles with imaginary creatures whose abilities are defined by rules and numbers. That's Pokémon, but it's also D&D. It's roleplaying in general."

In addition to his work on the new edition of the game, Jonathan also makes time to play games with his five-year-old daughter, Tessa. "I share my hobby with her as much as I can," he says. He describes a game he's made up for her that they call "Spaceship." "Each of us draws a spaceship, then I roll a die. Tessa decides which spaceship gets assigned that die. Then we roll a die for the other spaceship. Whichever number is higher, that spaceship wins that battle and gets to draw a laser line from it to the other one and burn a hole through that other ship. When a ship's been burned four times, it's destroyed. Because she gets first pick of the die rolls, she'll usually win, but because there's chance involved, she won't always win. That teaches her that there are good and bad die rolls, and you can exercise some control over them, but there's always going to be some randomness. And that's the definition of good gaming, isn't it?"

Making the Best Better

The new D&D game is going to rock your world ... maybe even your real one.

"The guiding concept behind the new edition," Jonathan says, "was to make it demonstrably better. The changes had to pan out in actual play value. If a big change made our playtest results better, we made the change."

"You're dead now. You can't move or speak. The world becomes black and your head turns inside out with pain. Unable to scream or move, your senses are overwhelmed with agony and terror. Finally, an escape! You feel released, lighter than air, nothing but pure consciousness hovering over the hellish pain of your corpse."

If you are tired of spending hundreds of dollars on video games which you gawk over for a week and forget about, and are tired of wishing for that one game that would fulfill your fantasies only to be let down yet again, try Medievia. Most of the people who play the game a few times play Medievia for years. Why?

- **It's Free:** Yes, Medievia was free in 1991 and we are proud to say that it is still free. Many players who play Medievia daily for months and years on end donate to keep the game running. We are trying to make the biggest and best game on the Internet. Ever wonder what kind of game would exist if players were allowed to suggest changes and then help program them in for years on end? You guessed it! A game of un-paralleled richness, balance, and depth of game play.
- **It's Like Being in a Book:** Medievia is a pure text game. Imagine yourself immersed in a book with thousands of other players, deciding your fate and the future of your story. We choose not to incorporate graphics into our game because we believe that you cannot have a game as deep and as large as Medievia is in any other way. Just like many books are better than most movies, Medievia is better than most graphical games. In fact, people who play Medievia after having experienced Everquest®, Ultima Online®, Quake™, and other expensive games invariably mail us and thank us for making the very best game in the world. Oh yes, they play their most recent favorite graphic game on occasion, but they continue to play Medievia year after year. In the end, graphics often limit more than they enhance.
- **It May Be the Largest Virtual World on the Internet:** Most graphic games must totally re-invent themselves every two to three years in order to take advantage of the latest graphic technology. They are never able to grow into a game so large that you can play it for years and still see new places and enjoy some features that you didn't know existed. It is nearly impossible to explore all of Medievia. You will adventure with friends in haunted graveyards, castles, forests, catacombs, and hundreds of other places. You will fly on dragon back, trade with covered wagons, join clans and possibly make your own clan towns that will have to be defended from dragons, armies and things from the depths of hell. Medievia even has its own player driven economy and its own storm systems. We supply the world, you supply another person to live in it for as long as you like.
- **It is Here to Stay:** When you enter the world of Medievia, you enter a world that has been growing and refining itself for almost a decade. We have taken player ideas and input and responded with new features since 1991. The result is not a game, it is a complete world that is waiting for you. It is a world that will continue to thrive for as long as you wish to play, whether it be for months or for years. We promise that as long as players play Medievia, the game will continue on, becoming bigger and better every year.
- **It's Social:** Most online games allow you to talk by typing in sentences to other players. Some even allow you to speak to them with microphones. The problem with these games is that the social interaction in these games is completely overshadowed by the graphical gameplay. In Medievia you will talk to and become close friends with many people. No matter what time of the day it is, you will find that you can log on and have an adventure with your friends. All age groups play Medievia; We have many players under 20, many players over 60, and clans for players of any age group.
- **It's International:** Medievia thrives 24 hours a day because people from around the globe play at the same time and they do it on the same server. Most on-line games split the world up into local servers. A player from France has little chance of meeting a player from Philadelphia on these games. Medievia offers a truly international gaming world.
- **It Runs on Older Machines:** It does not matter what kind of computer you may have, since Medievia is all text, you can play it right now. Medievia does not require an expensive computer to run since all of the processing is done server side.
- **It's Immersive:** Medievia offers a game of unparalleled richness and interactivity, a game that you can truly lose yourself in. Some days you may decide to help protect your friends in a trade run. Some days you may enter a player killing zone to try and outwit another player or clan. Some days you may just hang out with friends and discuss life. Maybe you join in a hero battle that anyone can watch. Maybe you dare to enter a dragon's lair with your friends in an effort to stop the dragon from attacking a local town. Medievia has most aspects of life in the game. People get married and divorced on the game. Our new bloodlines module allows you to continue your line and have children in the game. You wish to be immersed in a game for a while? Try Medievia.

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Creature Concerns

My name is Travis Worwood, and I would like to start by letting you know that I have not been playing the game long, nor have I had a long subscription to this magazine, but I intend to.

I started playing the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game in 2nd Edition, so I had no idea what 1st Edition was. I love everything I have heard about the new edition, though, and I really liked the *PLAYER'S OPTION* books.

I have only one concern: **You're making all the classes much cooler.** Giving rogues more skills than everyone else lets you customize your rogue to be different from anyone else's. Giving fighters "feats" is a great idea; that will really set them apart. More spells at lower levels, swapping spells for healing, the list goes on and on. I noticed that much of this was taking away the disadvantages of classes in 2nd Edition. I know that I have no idea of the new edition with just these little countdown articles and the website, but I just wanted to make sure: **Are the monsters improving with the characters?**

If you make all the classes so much better, a kobold war party won't even be a threat to 1st-level characters. I am sure that when I buy the book it will all come clear, but I couldn't wait to know.

Travis Worwood • Kaysville, UT

Don't worry about the new monsters, Travis. *They can more than hold their own in the new D&D game. Just take a gander at the "Beasts of the Pomarj" in this issue. These are the least dangerous of the creatures James Jacobs has already created for the magazine. If you want something really tough to throw at your characters, check out "Denizens of the Wormcrawl Fissure" and "Children of Tharizdun," set to appear this fall. If that's still not enough for you, brace yourself for a return to the* Barrier Peaks *crash site in early 2001. If your PCs don't suffer a few casualties when facing these monstrosities, then you should turn in your DM's screen.*

We Are Not Amusing

I kept quiet when the April issues went from silly to somewhat silly to a couple of token humor articles. I understand that not everyone might experience the same paroxysms of laughter that I do upon witnessing stats for the Pigeontoad or reading the spell description for the *wall of missiles*. I can accept that.

But after reading issue #272, I was left with the feeling that something was very, very wrong. I went back to the beginning and slowly flipped through the magazine until I had reached the end. My initial fears were confirmed. No "Dragonmirth!" Plus, the single-panel cartoons that had formerly been scattered through the issue were not to be found! Not a one! Oh, sure, "Nodwick" and "Shopkeep" were present and accounted for, but they just don't capture the humor of "Dragonmirth."

So, I ask you, is this the way things are to be? **Is "Dragonmirth" forever gone**, or did the art folder get lost in a stack of papers so the issue had to be run without cartoons? Please, I must know!

Matt Brooks • Williamsburg, VA

We expected to print more cartoons in the April and May issues, but last-minute production changes and simple human oversight left them waiting for later issues. Last month, you saw the return of spot cartoons throughout the magazine, and—due to popular demand— ***"Dragonmirth" has also returned*** *as a page dedicated to cartoons. As always, your wish is our day planner.*

According to Jonathan, players will be pleased to find that the game no longer focuses on what a character can or can't do, but instead on what happens when that character tries. "Old D&D said wizards can't wear armor," Jonathan explains. "The new edition says what happens if a wizard does. Old D&D says that a dwarven fighter can't move silently; new D&D spells out just how bad that fighter is at moving silently but lets him try if he wants to." Removing absolute restrictions inevitably led to all kinds of weird cases that didn't come up in the game before, but Jonathan feels that the new system allows for "sensible rulings about the unusual cases."

While many things stayed the same, the changes that were made were made with one particular goal in mind: to make the game fun.

"The most radical change is to have skills, saving throws, attack rolls, and ability checks all run off the same mechanic," Jonathan says. "You roll 1d20 to represent luck, you add a single modifier to represent your character's raw talent (that's your ability modifier), and you add another single modifier to represent your character's training and experience. The higher you get, the better. Now you can measure all your character's bonuses on the same scale. A +5 on an attack roll means about the same thing as a +5 on your Move Silently check, which means about the same thing as a +5 on your Fortitude saving throw."

The most controversial change, according to Jonathan, is initiative. Under the new rules, you roll your initiative at the beginning of a battle and keep the same initiative order throughout the battle. "We're so confident that this rule improves game play [by making combat run faster, cleaner, and better] that we included it even though most fans don't like it when they first hear about it!" Monks are back. Barbarians are back. A sorcerer class was added. Characters have become what Jonathan describes as "customizable." A fighter can now be a "subtle expert or a muscular bruiser." And the assassin class returns, although as a "prestige" class (one you have to earn your way into).

How does Jonathan feel players are going to react to the "new" D&D game?

"By and large," he answers, "those who hear about it are going to worry about it, those who see it will be intrigued by it, and those who play it will love it." D

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The Spider-Guy Strikes Back

First off, I wish to say I don't hide behind my DM's screen or keep who I am a secret. I just went around the block with issue #272, and I found a lot that caught my interest. There's too much to list here, but what caught my eye was being shot down by a fellow gamer, a Ms. Goodwin. I was going to remain silent ... until I read what she said about me.

So, hello, everyone. My name is Ed Perez, but most of you might know me as "the-spider-on-the-table guy." (I get jokes about that all the time.) That's not my name, so **please stop calling me that**, and don't call me "Ed the demonic DM." **I'm not demonic.** I've got a big heart and an even bigger sense of humor, so lighten up. If you wish to title me, call me what I'm known as: Ed the Underdog. I have a lot of pen pals out there who might read this and say, "Hey, I know him. That's my buddy."

Yes, **I did scare the H-E-double-hockey-sticks out of my players.** I'm not sorry, and I will do something as drastic again; I do it all the time. It was just one of the many ways I get back at my players for trying to drill a hole in my DM's cap. Gracy honored me by sending in that DM-of-the-Month entry, even though she made me out to be a bad guy. For the record, her nickname is "Stooger," and she was hiding in my bathroom for over two hours. What she didn't tell you was about the way she and the other players play. Let's just say that I don't find too much humor in "Knights of the Dinner Table," because I deal with stuff like that for real.

Like one time, the party ran a stake through the heart of an entire village of 0-level NPCs 'cause they thought I was running a *From Dusk Til Dawn* adventure. They were wrong, and even after the first ten villagers died and no one grew fangs and attacked, they still stuck to their plan. Not only do they not take "no" for an answer, but **they slap around every NPC they meet under 4 feet tall.**

I'm a very happy-go-lucky guy, but I have feelings too, damn it! All is not lost, because I can deal with them; I know how to get even.

This letter goes out to the lady who was glad she wasn't there. I don't play to be myself in another world either, so don't think that you got me all wrong. I can tell the difference between fantasy and reality. **I'm not an elf, nor do I want to be.** I'm not a demonic DM or some spider guy. I'm just a DM, one of millions, who runs the game to have fun. If a big man confronted me with a sword, I (as Ed), would make him wish I were you, because in real life I'm a boxer as well as a brown belt. My character is the one who would run! (Kobold thieves are not much for combat.) You strongly disagree with my actions. Very well, I'm sorry I can't please everyone, and if you don't like my DMing and wish to shoot me down in the future, please don't put me on the spot in my favorite magazine.

Before I go, I wish to add that in "Forum" in issue #272, Mr. Roberts suggested removing gnomes and halflings altogether, calling them uninteresting, annoying, and unplayable. **Dude!** The character is as boring as the player makes him. No one says you can't remove them from your campaign, but by saying that they're pathetic and unadventurous, you have never met my halfling Redwind.

Ed "The Underdog" Perez • Bronx, NY

Sorry, Ed, but you'll always be the spider-guy to us. *But we think it's a badge of honor, so don't feel too bad. On the other hand, if you ever visit the offices, you will be searched for bugs.*

Now that you've seen the new Player's Handbook *and the revamped* Dragon, *let us know what you think by dropping us a line at* scalemail@wizards.com.

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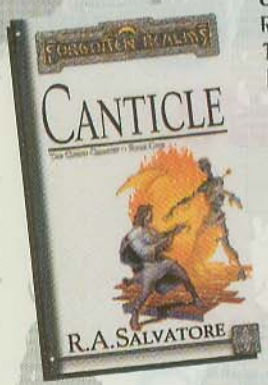

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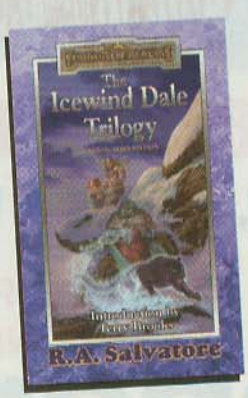

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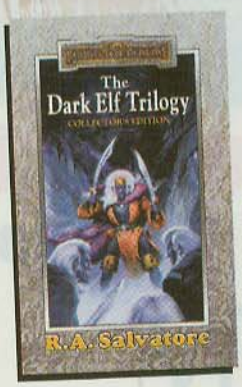

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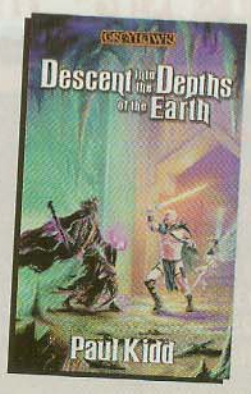
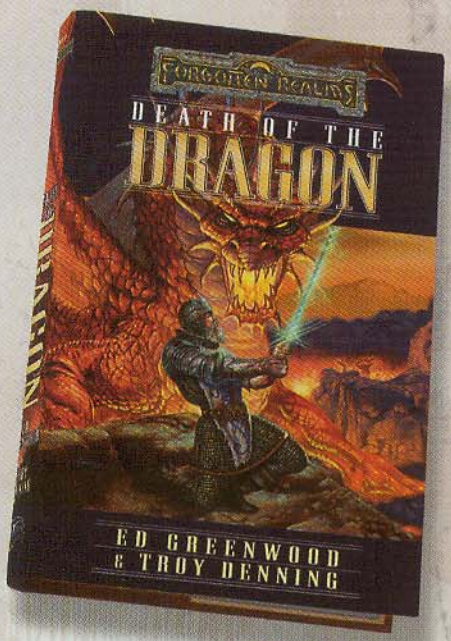


DESCENT INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE EARTH
PAUL KIDD

The intrigues of faery court force the Justicar into the depths of the earth to fight hobgoblins, drow, and other dark enemies in order to save the faery Escalla.

VILLAINS 7

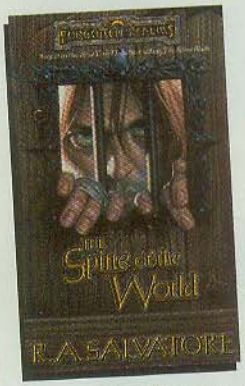


Death of the Dragon
ED GREENWOOD & TROY DENNING

Cormyr has endured a millennium of travail, but the tearing talons of dark magic and a dragon of unparalleled evil threaten the kingdom's very existence.

Baldur's Gate II: Shadows of Amn
PHILIP ATHANS

Shadow thieves, vampires, and rockworms run rampant on the Sword Coast in the action-packed novelization of the **Baldur's Gate II** computer game from BioWare and Interplay.



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R. A. SALVATORE

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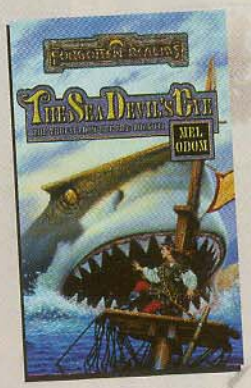

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Convention

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		A one	B C two	three	D four GAMEFEST XXI • SAN DIEGO WIZARD WORLD • ROSEMONT	five
E six WIZARD WORLD	F seven	eight	B nine GAMEFEST XXI • SAN DIEGO	G ten GENCON • MILWAUKEE	eleven LAIRE-CON • CAMP SACAJEWIA	H twelve
I thirteen GAMEFEST XXI GENCON LAIRE-CON	F fourteen	J fifteen	B C sixteen	K seventeen	L eighteen	nineteen
M twenty	F twentyone	N twentytwo	B twentythree	O twentyfour	twentyfive BUBONICON • ALBUQUERQUE DRAGONFLIGHT • SEATTLE	H twentysix
P twentyseven BUBONICON DRAGONFLIGHT	F twentyeight	twentynine	B C thirty	Q thirtyone		

A RPGA Tonight: Chronicles of Darkness Introduction
B Living City Time
C RPGA Writers' Workshop
D RPG Hour: Death of the Dragon
E From the Dragon's Mouth: *Dragon*'s New 3rd Edition Focus
F HQ Time at RPGA
G Virtual Gen Con Report
H Totally Twisted Trivia
I Designer's Guild: 3rd Edition D&D Designer Free-for-all
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August Events

A RPGA TONIGHT
Chronicles of Darkness Introduction

This week we look at the our new campaign in White Wolf's Storyteller game system, *Chronicles of Darkness*. Campaign developers Nicky Rea, Jackie Cassada, and Carla Hollar will tell you about the campaign and how to get involved.

August 1, 6:00 P.M.

B LIVING CITY TIME

Every Wednesday, you'll find a LIVING CITY board member in the RPGA Forum ready to answer your questions about our most popular LIVING campaign. This is your chance to verify rumors, ask questions, and give your suggestions to the board.

August 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30, 6:00 P.M.

C RPGA MEMBERS WRITER'S WORKSHOP

Robert Wiese hosts a writer's workshop in the RPGA Events room for veteran and budding roleplaying scenario writers. This session is designed to help people become better adventure designers and will get into topics involved in writing adventure scenarios.

August 2, 16, and 30, 6:00 P.M.

D RPG HOUR
Death of a Dragon

When Cormyr is attacked by a dragon from without and treachery from within, King Azoun IV must make the ultimate sacrifice to defend his beloved land. *Death of the Dragon* marks a pivotal moment in the history of the Realms—a loss whose effects will be felt throughout the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting. Special guest Ed Greenwood joins us for a discussion of his latest contribution to the Realms.

August 4, 6:00 P.M.

WIZARD WORLD

August 4-6 IL

Rosemont Exposition Center,
Rosemont, IL.
Contact:
Wizard World Chicago
Advance Ticket Sales
P.O. Box 656
Yorktown Heights, NY 10598.
Website: www.wizardworld.com/chicago/chicago.html
Telephone: (800) 690-1669
Featuring: demonstrations by Wizards of the Coast and other planned events.

GAMEFEST XXI

August 4-13 CA

Game Towne, San Diego, CA.
Contact:
Shannon Grove or John Hall
Game Towne
3954 Harney St.
San Diego, CA 92110.
Email: gametowne@yahoo.com
Website: www.gametowne.com
Featuring: "Games, fun, and prizes."

E FROM THE DRAGON'S MOUTH
DRAGON's New 3rd Edition D&D Focus

You can see how the new D&D game has changed the look of *DRAGON* and *DUNGEON Magazines*, but what does it mean for the content? Chat with the editors to find out.

August 6, 6:00 P.M.

F HQ TIME AT RPGA

Every Monday, you'll find RPGA Headquarters staff in the RPGA Forum. Staff will answer questions and shoot the breeze with you (but not engage in in-character chat) so come on by!

August 7,14, 21, and 28 6:00 P.M.

GEN CON GAME FAIR

August 10-13 WI

Midwest Express Center,
Milwaukee, WI.
Contact:
Wizards of the Coast
P.O. Box 1740
Renton, WA 98057.
Website: www.wizards.com/gencon
Telephone: (800) 529-EXPO

G VIRTUAL GEN CON REPORT

Roving Reporter reports live from the Game Fair!

August 10, 6:00 P.M.

LAIRE-CON

August 11-13 NJ

Camp Sacajewia, New Jersey.
Contact: Adam Krat.
Email: mayoraloe@aol.com

H TOTALLY TWISTED TRIVIA

Test your knowledge in the Totally Twisted Trivia game for prizes! Hosted by your Wizard.Community WizOs.

August 12 and 26, 9:00 P.M.

I DESIGNERS' GUILD
3rd Edition D&D Designer Free-for-All

We cut in on the revelry of the last night of GEN CON to ask Monte Cook, Skip Williams, and any other D&D designer we can snag to answer a 3rd Edition D&D free-for-all. Designers can finally spill on any detail you want to know!

August 13, 6:00 P.M.

J WHY COME TO THE BIG SHOW?

With the GEN CON Game Fair behind us, we look at what was fun about the big show. We will share stories and try to convey why you should consider coming next year. We'll also talk about Winter Fantasy, the RPGA's own convention, which takes place in late January 2001. With guests Keith Hoffman, Jason Nichols, Tom Terrill, and Greg Dreher.

August 15, 6:00 P.M.

K HOW TO ENGAGE IN 3RD EDITION COMBAT

Hosted by RPG R&D designer and editor Dave Noonan.

August 17, 6:00 P.M.

L THE D&D ADVENTURE GAME

The new edition of the D&D game is going to be the biggest thing to hit the roleplaying game market, and the *D&D Adventure Game* is the best way to enter the limitless realms of imagination. Designers Jonathan Tweet and Jason Carl explain what this first adventure in 3rd Edition has to offer you.

August 18, 6:00 P.M.

BUBONICON 32

August 25-27 NM

Howard Johnson East,
Albuquerque, NM.
Contact:
NMSF Conference
P.O. Box 37257
Albuquerque, NM 87176.
Email: cwcraig@nmia.com
Website:
www.members.aol.com/bubonicon
Featuring: Literary-oriented con with two track programming. Panels, art show, gaming, Saturday night dance, auction, costume contest, filking.

M INDUSTRY EDGE
3rd Edition D&D Editing Insiders

After the designers finished their work on the latest D&D projects, the editors took charge! Julia Martin and Miranda Horner will tell you how they shaped the raw material of 3rd Edition into what you see today.

August 20, 6:00 P.M.

N WIZARDS PROFILES
Peter Adkison Q&A

Peter Adkison is not just the CEO of the company, he's a gamer, too! Peter set the overall strategy for the new edition of D&D and led the design team through its initial stages. Now he's here to learn from you whether he succeeded.

August 22, 6:00 P.M.

O HOW-TO MIN/MAX YOUR 3RD EDITION PC

Hosted by RPG R&D designers Andy Collins and Sean Reynolds.

August 24, 6:00 P.M.

DRAGONFLIGHT

August 25-27 WA

Seattle University,
Seattle, WA.
Contact:
Mike Westover
PO Box 776
Seattle, WA98111-0776
Website: www.dragonflight.org
Featuring: Role-playing, miniatures, board games, TCGs, networked computer games, seminars, and auction.

P SAGE ADVICE LIVE!
Special Conversion Issues Focus

No doubt the release of 3rd Edition D&D has you looking over your adventures and evaluating how your play is impacted. If you've got questions, The Sage has answers. Skip will be giving special attention to conversion issues during this Sage Advice Live!

August 27, 6:00 P.M.

Q HOW TO CONVERT YOUR MAGIC SPELLS TO 3RD EDITION

Hosted by RPG R&D designer Rob Heinsoo and D&D Worlds Creative Director Rich Baker.

August 31, 6:00 P.M.

ϖ Australian convention
φ Canadian convention
α European convention
δ Online convention

CONVENTION CALENDAR POLICIES This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed. To ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct. The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order: 1. Convention title and dates held 2. Site and location 3. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained. Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. **Warning:** We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility. Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," DRAGON Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A. If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 204-7254 (U.S.A.). **Important:** DRAGON Magazine does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct. To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

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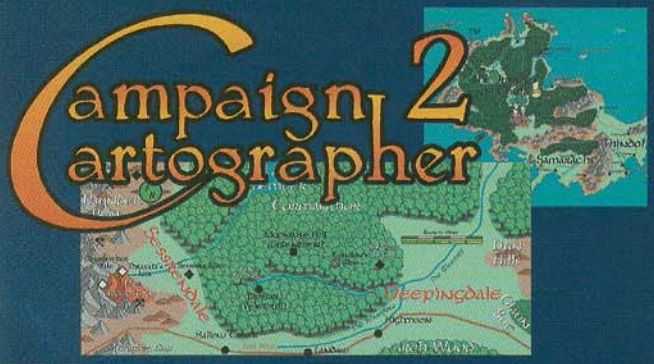
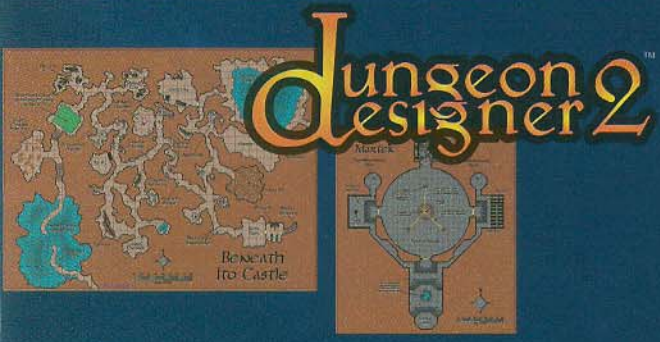


We used **CC2** and add-ons to create more than 800 maps for the Forgotten Realms® Interactive Atlas. To make it a little easier on ourselves we added a bunch of new features, giving us **CC2 version 6**. Now you can use freehand sketching or fractalise any shape.

Add labeled hex or square grids you can see before you place then snap to them. See the results of editing commands before completing them. Outline and explode text for great text effects. Print across multiple sheets of paper at any scale for huge, impressive maps. And that's just a sample. With improved help and a new 170-page manual, **CC2 version 6** is the only mapping sofware for the discerning gamer.



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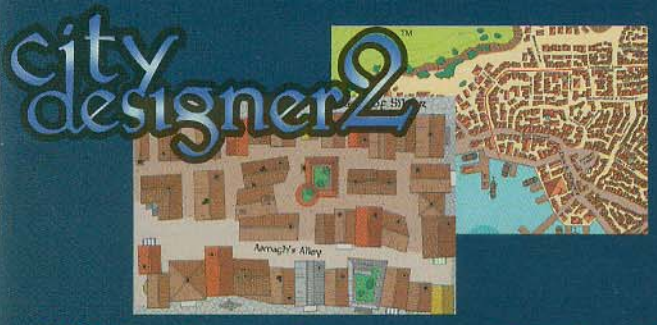

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Upgrades for CC-DOS users: CC2 DOS upgrade is US$49.95 in the US and Canada, £31.95 in the rest of the world. **DD2 DOS upgrade** is US$27.95 in the US and Canada, £18.95 in the rest of the world. **CD2 DOS upgrade** is US$32.95 in the US and Canada, £20.95 in the rest of the world.

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Questions?
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Requirements
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September Events

WINCON φ
September 1-3 **Canada**
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.
Contact: David KW Derksen
P.O. Box 28073
1795 Henderson Hwy
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2G1P3
Canada.
Website:
www.pangea.ca/~greywolf/wincon.htm
Email: wincon@greywolf.mb.ca
Featuring: Highlander TCG Canadian Nationals, Squig Hopper Derby, RPG tournament, TCGs, RPGA events, Vampire LARP.

CONQUEST2000
September 1-4 **CA**
Clarion Hotel, Millbrae, CA.
Contact: PMB 1422
467 Saratoga Ave
San Jose CA 95129.
Email: info@con-quest.com
Website: www.con-quest.com
Featuring: RPGs, LARPs, miniatures, board games, computer games, flea market, auction, painting contests, auction.

RATCON III
September 9 **IN**
The Auditorium, 4-H Fairgrounds
Lebanon, IN.
Contact: RatCon III
730 N. Jameson St
Lebanon, IN 4652.
Email: ratcon3@yahoo.com
Website: www.subverbis.com/ratcon.htm
Featuring: Six different TCG tournaments, miniatures, board games, RPGs.

COGCON8
September 22-24 **MO**
University Center East, Rolla.
Contact: Robert Hobart
300 Foxcreed Rd.
Rolla, MO 65401.
Website: www.rollanet.org/~cogcon
Email: youta@rollanet.org
Featuring: RPGA events including: ALTERNITY, AD&D, LIVING CITY, LIVING DEATH™, LIVING JUNGLE™.

TRINOC-CON 2000
Sept. 29-Oct. 1 **NC**
Durham Marriott & Civic Center, Durham, North Carolina.
Gaming Guest of Honor: Skip Williams.
Contact: Trinoc-con
P.O. Box 10633
Raleigh, NC 27605-0633.
Email: trinoccon@aol.com
Website: www.trinoc-con.org
Featuring: RPGA, D&D, TCGs, LARPs, art show, literary panels.

BEDLAM φ
September 30 **Canada**
Days Inn, Toronto, Ontario.
Contact: The General Staff
17B Wales Ave.
Toronto, Ontario, M5T1J2.
Email: generalstaff@canada.com
Website: www.dpsimpson.com
Hours 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. Auction 12 P.M. to 3 P.M. Games begin 9:30 A.M.

October Events

KNIGHT GAMES
October 20-22, **NY**
Berkeley-Carroll School
Brooklyn, NY.
Contact: Knight Games
P.O. Box 3041
Brooklyn, NY 11202-3041.
Email: knghtgames@aol.com
Proceeds benefit Camp Friendship
Featuring: RPGA premier events, RPGs, board games, railroad games, and CCGs.

JVL-CON 2000
October 28-29 **WI**
Best Western, Janesville.
Contact: Ray Norton
1316 Monterey Lane
Janesville, WI 53546.
Website: members.aol.com/rayshobby
Email: rayshobby@aol.com
Featuring: RPGA events, contests, Halloween party, and more.

November Events

UNI-CON 2000
November 10-12 **MO**
Holiday Inn at I-44 and US Hwy 71
Joplin, MO.
Contact:
Changing Hands Book Shoppe
528 Virginia Ave
Joplin, MO 64801.
Website: www.unicon-joplin.com
Featuring: art show, LARP, video room, more.

SYNDICON 2000
November 18-19 **IN**
Holiday Inn Express,
Portage, Indiana.
Contact: Carl Cabanas.
Email: conman1@gte.net
ConMen Syndicate email:
theconmensyndicate@hotmail.com
Featuring: RPGA LIVING CITY, D&D, WORLD OF DARKNESS, GURPS, DEADLANDS, STAR WARS, ROBORALLY*, *Settlers*, VAMPIRE LARP.

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Come celebrate GEN CON's 33rd year, and experience gaming at its finest! We've sold-out the exhibition hall. We're anticipating record gamer turnout. We've scheduled more than 2,500 events, tournaments, workshops, and seminars. We're going to rig the convention center with a LAN so gamers can play computer games against each other. Games Workshop will run the largest-ever miniatures event featuring 150 gamers. The LEGENDS OF THE FIVE RINGS team will be making a surprise announcement. And let's not forget the exciting offerings from the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS team...

Witness the historic launch of the new edition of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. The celebration begins on "Third Edition Thursday" with a series of panels, discussions, and game demos surrounding this latest edition of the game. Hear from D&D creators David L. Arneson and Gary Gygax. Meet the producer of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS film, Corey Solomon. Discuss the philosophy behind the design team's work, hear why they made certain rules changes, and take a sneak peak at the upcoming DUNGEON MASTER's *Guide* and *Monster Manual*.

GEN CON offers all this and more. See you there!

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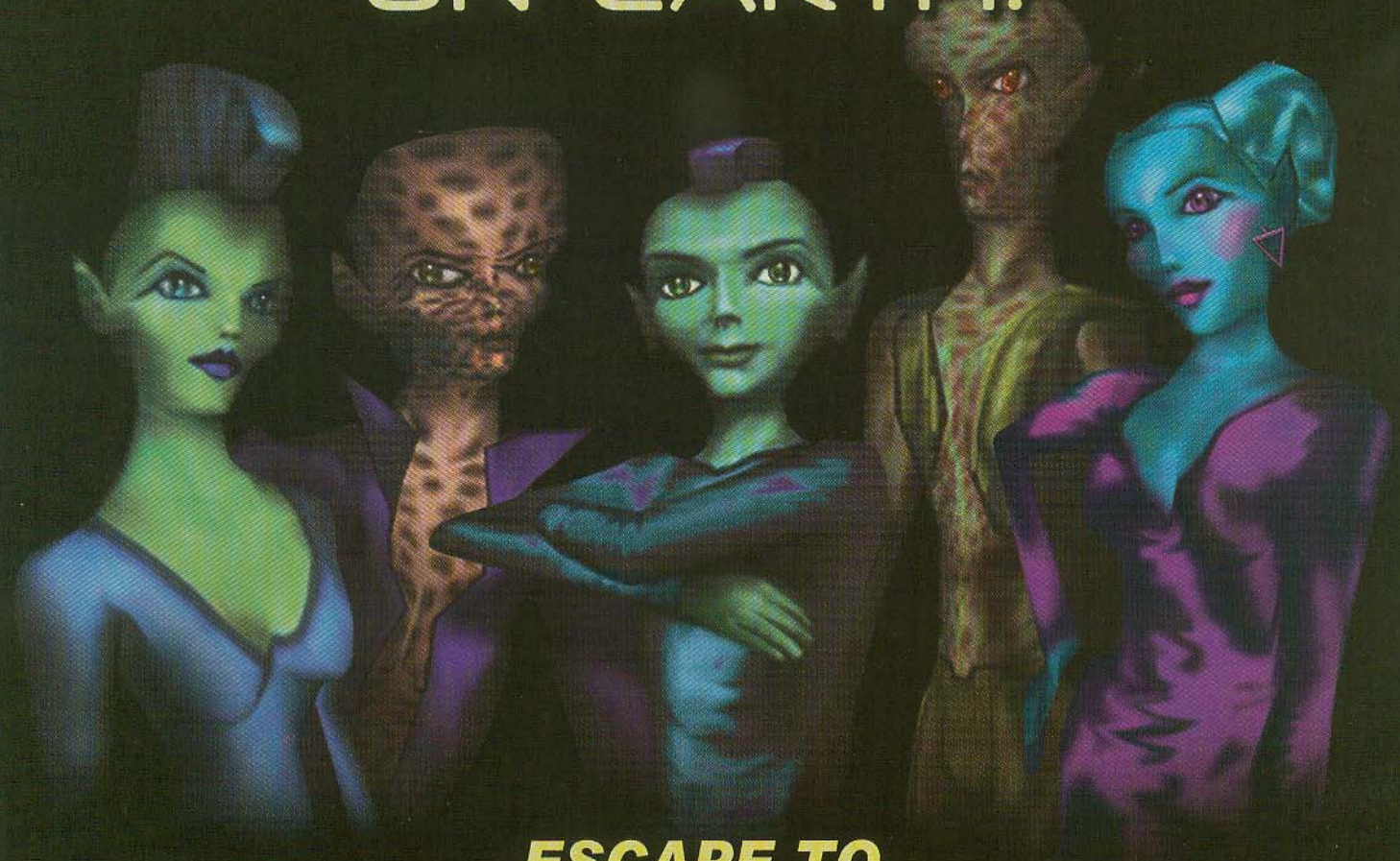

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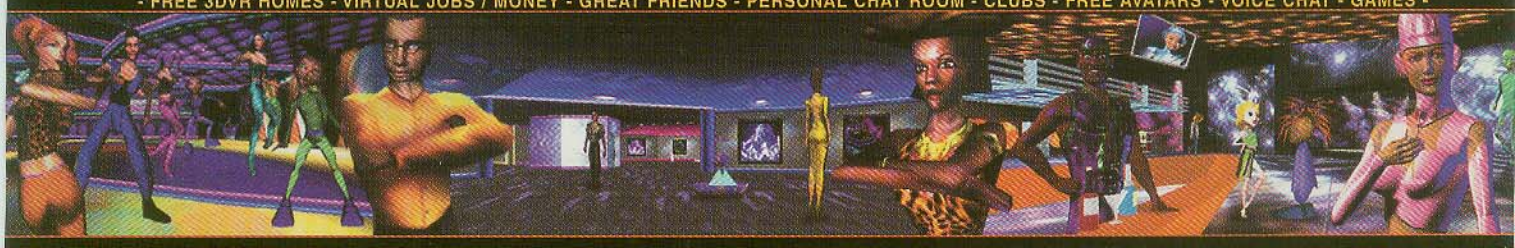

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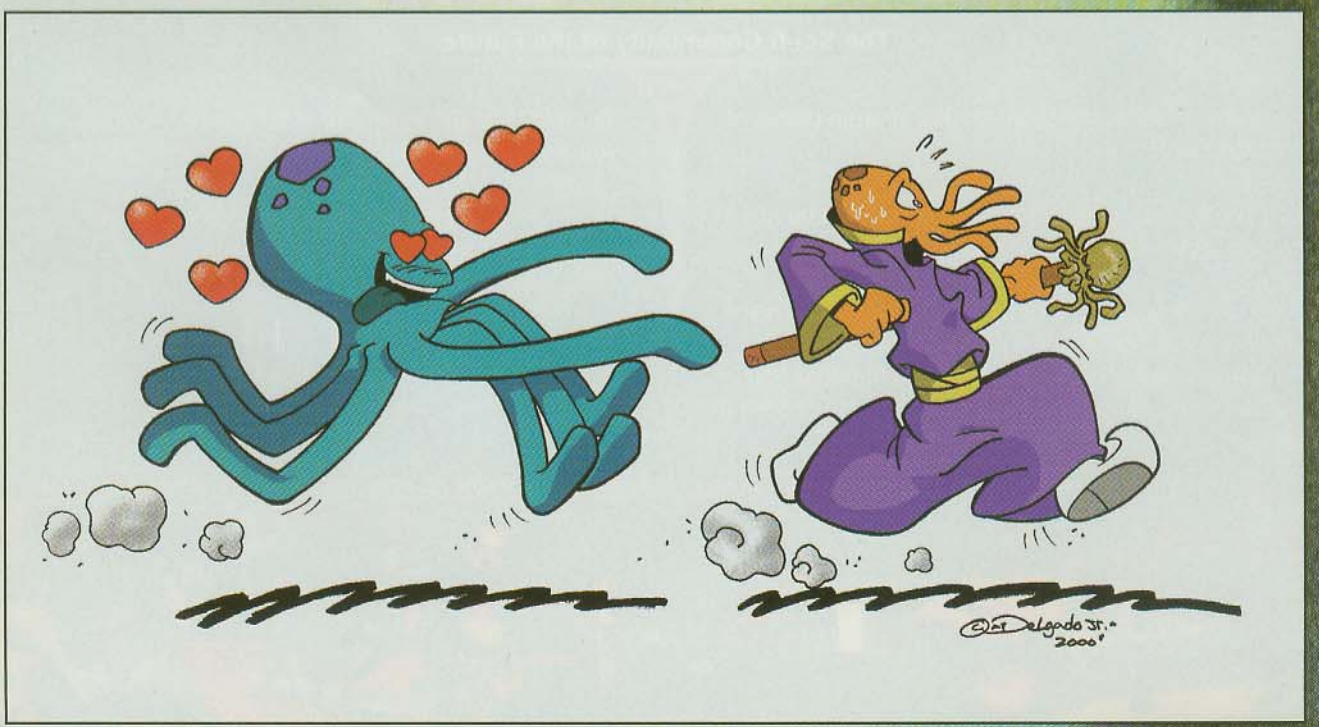

Coming Soon

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Unusual Suspects
By James Wyatt
Everyone expects a barbarian half-orc, but what about a savage elf? Or how about a gnome paladin? It's all possible in the new D&D Game.

Class Acts: The Duelist
By Monte Cook
The student of steel, the devotee of damage, and two or three other hyperbolic phrases still don't do justice to this new prestige class.

The Right Tool for the Job
By Andy Collins
"Exotic" doesn't necessarily mean strange, but these new D&D weapons range from the familiar to the downright weird.

Hooked
By Robin D. Laws
Running the adventure is the DM's job ... or is it? Here are 10 ways for players to drive the adventure.

Plus "Nodwick," "Sage Advice," "Dork Tower," "Power Play," "Dungeoncraft," and plenty more!

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Preview August

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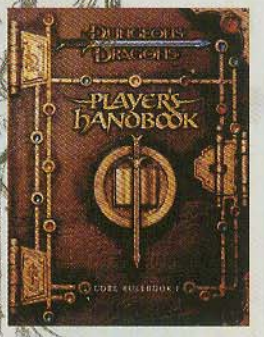
by Monte Cook, Jonathan Tweet, and Skip Williams



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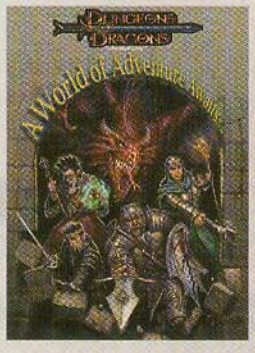

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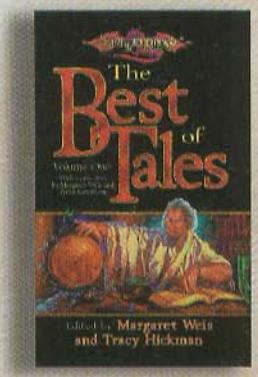

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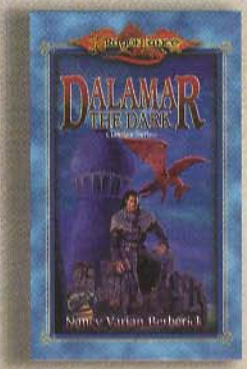

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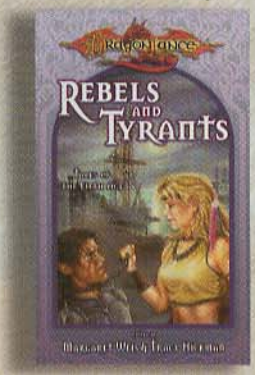

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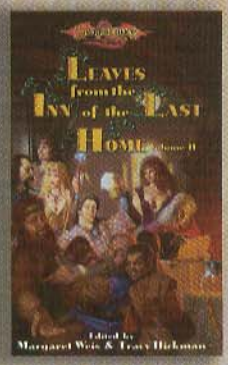

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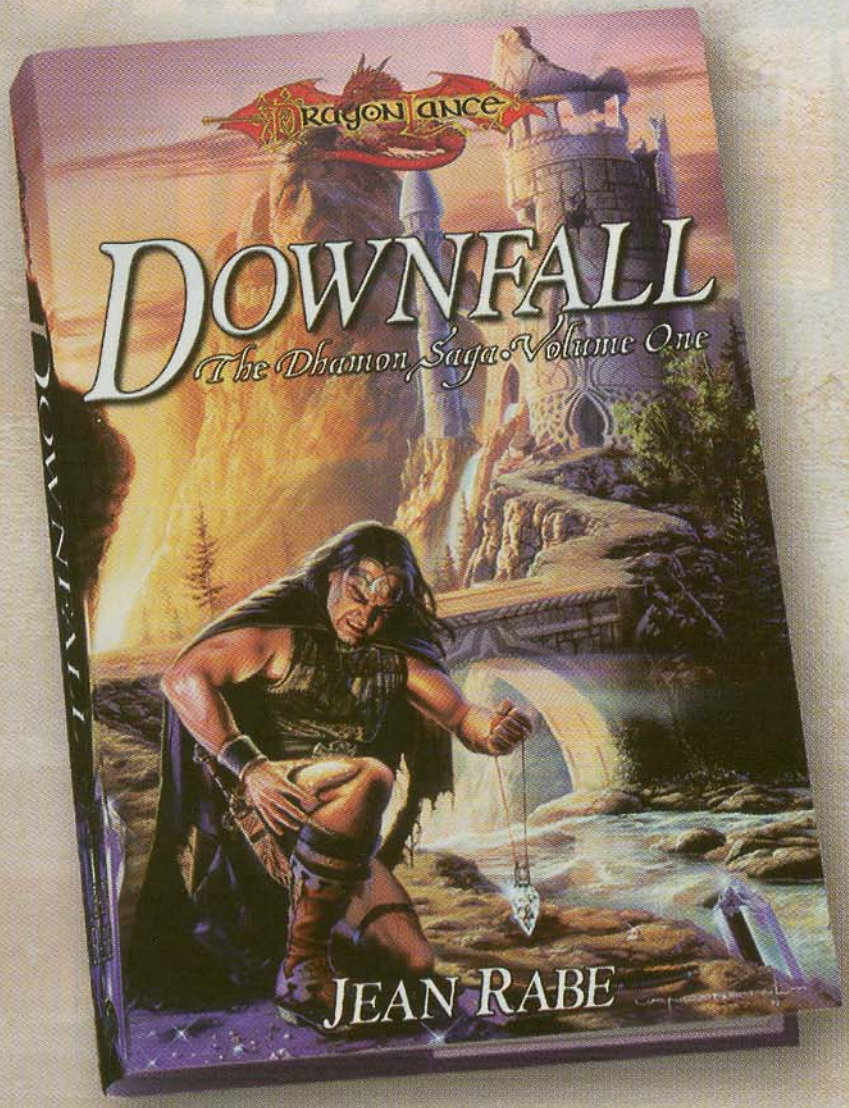

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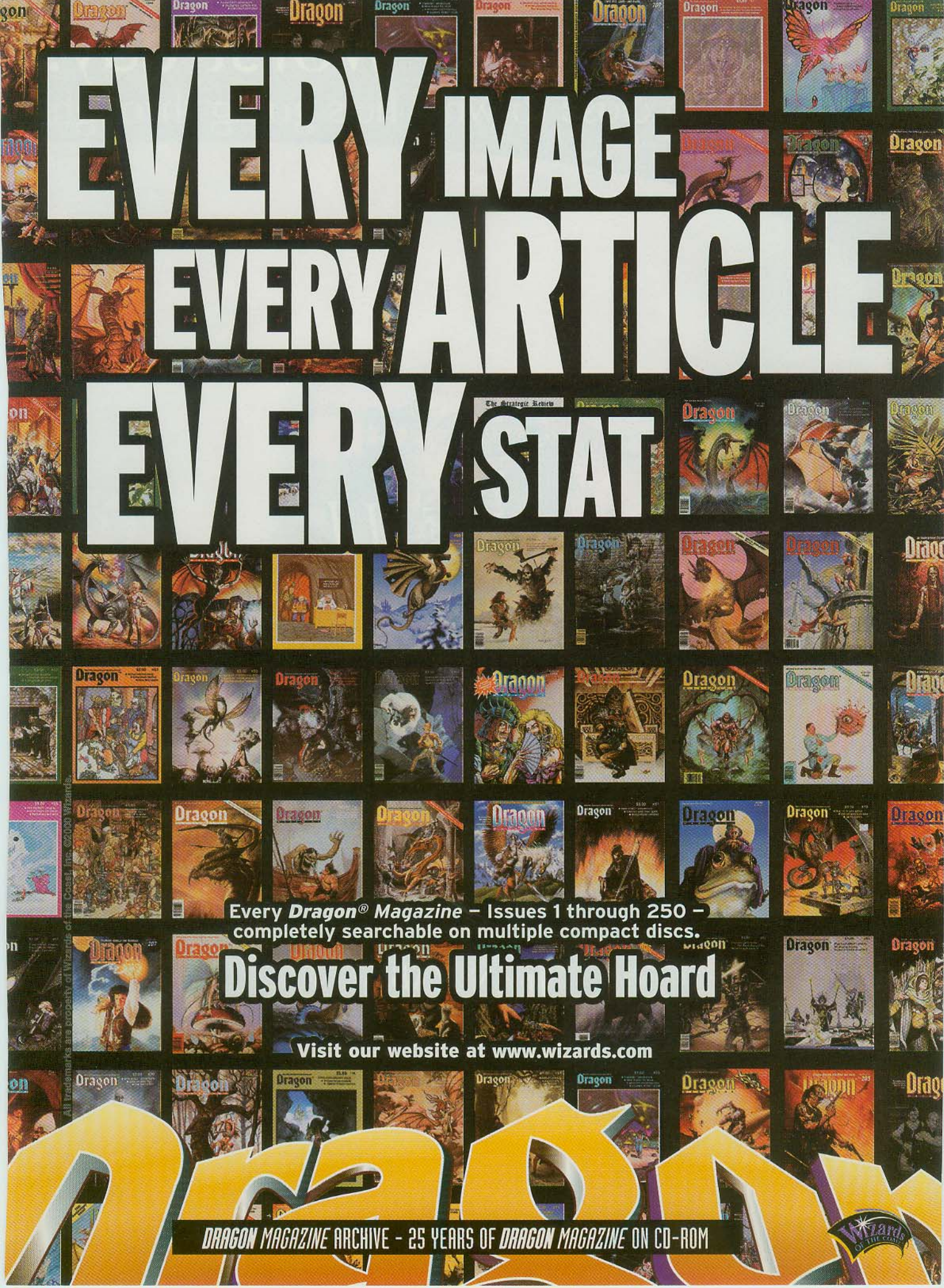
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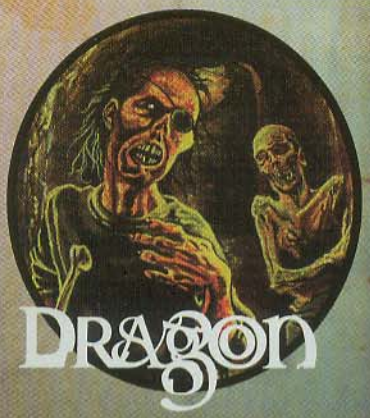

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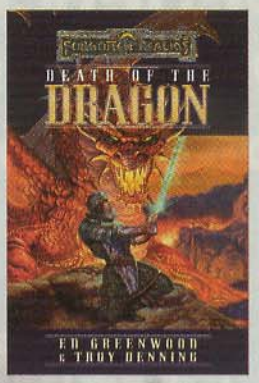

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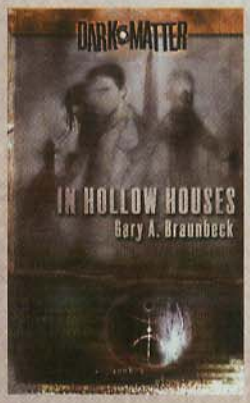

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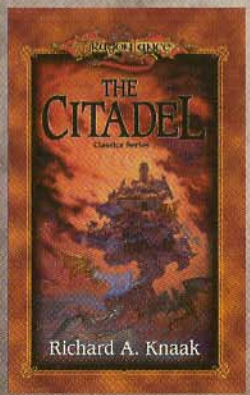

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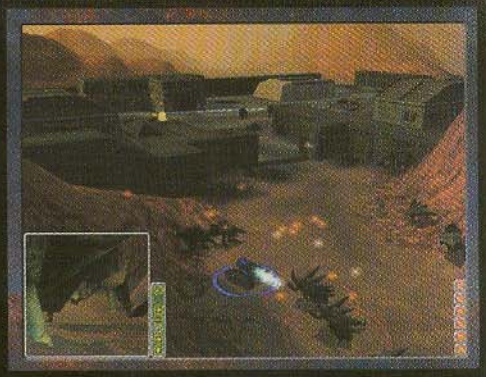

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Upcoming Product Guide

September

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New D&D Dungeon Master's Screen	Core Product	$9.95
The Sunless Citadel	D&D Adventure	$9.95
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October

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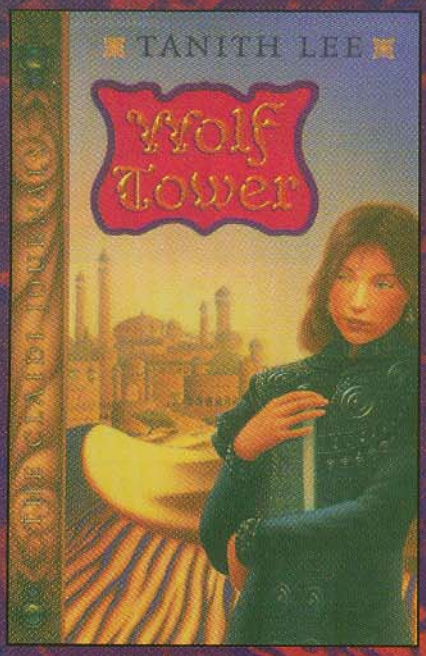

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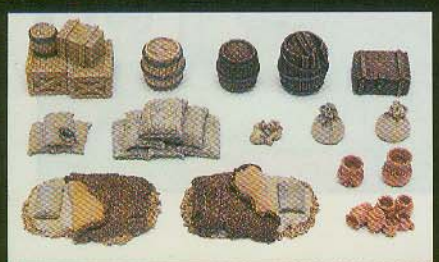

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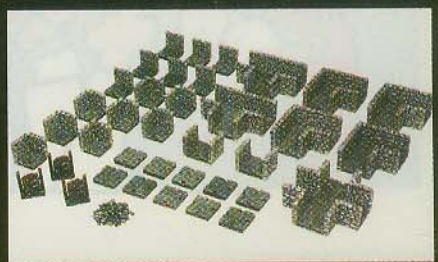

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One Roll To Rule Them All

The d20 Core Game Mechanic

by Jonathan Tweet

The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS rules use dice to answer two basic questions: "whether" and "how much." You roll dice, for example, to see whether your character's Reflex saving throw against a *fireball* succeeds, and the Dungeon Master rolls dice to see how much damage your character suffers.

The "how much" dice vary all over the place, from the minimalist "d2" (how much subdual damage a gnome does if he kicks you) to the classic "best 3d6 out of 4d6" (how much strength, agility, wits, and so on your character is graced with) to "40d12+400" (how many hit points a run-of-the-mill Colossal great red wyrm has).

While the "how much" dice vary, the "whether" die is almost always the same: the tried and true d20. The d20 governs a range of rolls that you can think of generally as "checks." You "check" whether you hit, whether you dodged the *lightning bolt*, and so on. While the die used is the same, however, it gets applied in a variety of ways.

The Commoner Standard

Every bonus you get on a d20 roll represents a way in which your character is above average, and every penalty represents a way in which he is below average. A character who is completely average, therefore, has no bonuses or penalties. This concept is the "commoner standard." If the Dungeon Master has to make a roll for some random commoner NPC, he can simply roll the d20, add nothing, and use the roll as it is. A commoner tries to bluff the PCs? The DM rolls d20 to see how well the commoner pulls off the bluff. A commoner tries to punch a PC? The DM rolls d20 to see how good the commoner's left jab is. A commoner tries to resist a PC's *charm person* spell? The DM rolls d20 for the saving throw.

The rule for the average commoner bonus, of course, applies only to commoners of the "average" race—humans. Nonhuman characters, even average ones of their race, have bonuses and penalties. The average dwarf has a +1 Constitution bonus and a -1 Charisma penalty. The average halfling gets a +3 bonus when throwing weapons (+1 for being more dextrous than the average human, +1 because targets are big relative to a halfling, and +1 for the halfling's cultural bonus with throwing things). Other races also have bonuses and penalties representing how they differ from the human average. Just as a PC's bonuses and penalties are relative to a commoner, a race's bonuses and penalties are relative to a human.

Even among humans, the "average" commoner is assumed to be the "average" age—young adult. Middle-aged, old, and venerable characters have higher mental stats and lower physical stats. The average "old shopkeeper," therefore, will have a better chance at resisting *charm person* but a worse chance to clock a PC with a right hook.

Of course, PCs don't spend a lot of time casting spells on or beating up random commoners. The "commoner standard" is more useful as a concept than as a rule used during play. After all, even among commoners, some are stronger, slower, cannier, or more foolish than average. In fact, the PCs might be surprised every once in a while to run into 6th-level commoners—characters whose hit points, feats, base attack bonuses, and base saving throw bonuses make them anything but average.

What the "commoner standard" does most is provide a standard by which to

EVERY BONUS YOU GET ON A d20 REPRESENTS A WAY IN WHICH YOUR CHARACTER IS ABOVE AVERAGE.

Check Summary Table

Check	Ability	Class & Level	Miscellaneous
Attack			
Melee	Strength	Base attack	Racial traits, size, Weapon Focus, Power Attack, Expertise, *true strike* spell, magic weapon bonus, and so on
Ranged	Dexterity	Base attack	
Saving Throw			
Fortitude	Constitution	Base save	Racial traits, Great Fortitude, cloak of resistance, *protection from evil* spell, and so on
Reflex	Dexterity	Base save	
Will	Wisdom	Base save	
Skill			
Climb, Jump, Swim	Strength	Skill ranks	Racial traits, speed, Skill Focus, armor check penalty
Hide, Move Silently, Open Lock	Dexterity	Skill ranks	Racial traits, size, Skill Focus, armor check penalty
Concentration	Constitution	Skill ranks	Skill Focus
Knowledge, Search, Spellcraft	Intelligence	Skill ranks	Racial traits, Skill Focus
Heal, Listen, Spot	Wisdom	Skill ranks	Racial traits, Skill Focus
Bluff, Diplomacy	Charisma	Skill ranks	Skill Focus
Other			
Force Door	Strength	–	Size
Initiative	Dexterity	–	Improved Initiative
Level Check	–	Level	Spell Penetration (vs. spell resistance)
Turn Undead	Charisma	See table in *PH*	*consecrate* and *desecrate* spells

The Check Summary Table shows how various checks use a character's stats to represent innate talent, training, and special circumstances.

judge a PC's stats and rolls. What does it mean if your PC has a Move Silently total bonus of +6? It means that she moves silently 6 points better than the average human. What does it mean to have a -1 Dexterity penalty? It means that the character is 1 point clumsier than average. What does it mean for the bard to sing a moving ballad and roll a 21 on his Perform check? It means that he's done better than the average commoner could ever hope to do.

Better Than Average

There are two fundamental reasons that your character can be different from average: innate qualities and life experience. The basic formula is that a d20 check includes one ability modifier representing a character's innate qualities and another modifier representing a character's training or other experience. Depending on the particular check, however, more modifiers might apply.

Innate qualities include:

- **personal abilities**, such as a +3 Dexterity bonus improving your Reflex saving throw;
- **racial traits**, such as an elf's +2 bonus on Listen, Search, and Spot checks; and
- **size**, such as a Small character's +4 bonus on Hide checks and -4 penalty on grapple checks.

Experience and training appear as bonuses based on:

- **class and level**, such as a 6th-level cleric's +5 base save for Will saving throws;
- **skill ranks**, such as a character getting a +6 bonus on Move Silently checks for having six ranks in that skill; and
- **feats**, such as a character getting +2 on Fortitude saving throws because of the feat Great Fortitude.

The line between innate and learned bonuses can be a little blurry. For example, a dwarf's +1 bonus to attack goblinoids and orcs is a racial trait, but it results from the special training the dwarf received growing up as part of dwarven society. It's not innate. On the other hand, a player is generally free to say that the feat or feats his character starts the game with could be innate. If your character is human, for example, it's okay to say that his Alertness feat is the result of a trace of elven blood running through his family. Ultimately, it doesn't much matter whether a +2 bonus on some check or another is innate or learned. It's just a handy way of thinking about the bonuses and how they apply.

D20 Subsystems

Each subsystem that uses the d20 treats the d20 roll and a character's influence on that roll differently. For

every system, however, when you roll the d20 and apply the modifiers, you're trying to roll "high enough."

What's "high enough"? That depends on what you're trying to do. The number you need to get is either some other character's check (an opposed roll) or a fixed number set by the circumstances (the Difficulty Class or DC). Armor Class is just a special sort of DC.

Attack Rolls

The fundamental attack roll includes a bonus based on your class and level (your base attack) and an ability bonus (Strength for melee attacks and Dexterity for ranged attacks). The most common attack roll is compared to the opponent's Armor Class. Feats (such as Weapon Focus, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, and Expertise) affect the attack roll. So does size, as the bigger you are the smaller everyone else is as a target. A host of other modifiers for magic weapons, cultural traits, and special combat situations also apply.

In general, as characters go up in level, attack bonuses increase faster than Armor Class because attack bonuses increase with class level or monster Hit Dice, but Armor Class doesn't. Hit points, however, increase with level and Hit Dice, and damage doesn't increase nearly as fast as hit points. Thus, high-level combats are generally a little longer than comparable low-level combats. You might hit more often at higher levels, but it takes more hits to bring a tougher enemy down.

Sometimes you'll make opposed attack rolls, such as when you pit your character's skill against an opponent's. For example, disarming an opponent requires a successful opposed attack roll.

A grapple check is a lot like an attack roll, except that big creatures get a hefty bonus and little creatures suffer major penalties. Grapple checks are opposed rolls, and armor is irrelevant in a grapple check.

Saving Throws

Like an attack roll, the basic saving throw includes a base saving throw bonus derived from a character's class and level plus a single ability modifier. As with an attack roll, feats (such as Iron Will), and racial traits (such as a halfling's +1 bonus on all saving throws) affect the rolls, as do various magic items and spells.

AS CHARACTERS GO UP IN LEVEL, ATTACK BONUSES INCREASE FASTER THAN ARMOR CLASS.

Your saving throw succeeds if it at least equals the DC for the attack. DCs in general increase by +1 per two levels of the attacker. Thus, DCs for saving throws go up about as fast as a character's base saves for his better saving throws. A wizard's base Will save, a fighter's base Fortitude save, and a rogue's base Reflex save increase by +1 every time the character reaches an even-numbered level. Since saving throw DCs and good base saves increase at roughly the same rate, saving throws are about as tough to make at 10th-level as they were at 1st. Of course, a character's lesser saves, such as a wizard's base Fortitude save or a fighter's base Will save, increase by only +1 per three levels, so characters actually lose ground in these areas. Magic items, spells, feats, and improved hit points generally make up for this shortfall.

For spells, you add the spell level to the spell's saving throw DC. The highest-level spell a wizard, cleric, or sorcerer can cast generally goes up by one for every two class levels. For instance, a 6th-level sorcerer can cast 3rd-level spells and an 8th-level sorcerer can cast 4th-level spells. Thus, for every two levels the spellcaster gains, the DC for his best spells goes up by one, so spell DCs increase about as fast as base saves for saving throws.

For special attacks, such as a monk's stunning attack or a monster's poison bite, the DC goes up by +1 per two class levels or Hit Dice. All else being equal, a 4-Hit Dice monstrous spider has poison that's one point harder to save against than a 2-Hit Dice monstrous spider. Just as a saving throw itself is based partly on an ability bonus of the defender, the DC for a saving throw is also based partly on an ability bonus of the attacker. For a monk's stunning attack, her Wisdom modifier applies. For a monster's attack, it's often the Constitution bonus (for physical attacks) or Charisma bonus (for magical attacks). Your saving throw DC for the great red wyrm's fiery breath is 40, so good luck.

Skills

The basic skill check includes a bonus for the character's skill ranks and a modifier based on one of his abilities. Unlike the base attack bonus and the base save bonus, your skill ranks are related to your class and level only indirectly. Your class determines which skills are easy to buy with skill points and which are expensive, and your class and level together determine the maximum number of ranks you can have in a skill. For instance, a 3rd-level rogue can spend 6 skill points to get six ranks in Search, but a wizard couldn't

Percentile Dice

In addition to the common d20, the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS rules occasionally use the d% (or d100) to answer the question "whether." For instance, when your character is between -1 and -9 hit points, you have a 10% chance each round to stabilize; and, if you don't stabilize, you lose a hit point. (At -10 hit points, your character is also "stable." He's dead.) This die roll is made on percentile dice. Mathematically, the same roll could be a straight d20 roll with no modifiers, with a DC of 19. But the d20 roll is made to be modified, and it would be natural when rolling to stabilize your character for you to ask, "What do I add to it?" When the answer is, "Don't add anything," then the roll is a d% roll.

The percentile format is a reminder that nothing modifies the roll. Percentile rolls include stabilizing chances when dying, miss chances due to concealment or invisibility, and arcane spell failure chances for wearing armor.

Armor Class, Spell DCs, and Damage: the Un-Checks

Like checks, Armor Class and the DCs of a spellcaster's spells include an ability bonus and optional bonuses for feats. Spell DCs also depend on a spell's level, which in turn is indirectly related to the spellcaster's class level. Armor Class and spells DCs are calculated like checks, except that you add the modifiers to 10 rather than to a d20 roll. The *Dungeon Master's Guide* includes optional rules for rolling Armor Class and spell DCs as checks.

A damage roll is not a check at all. It's a "how much" roll rather than a "whether" roll. Still, it follows some of the same basic rules for checks. Base weapon damage, even for strange "weapons" such as an owl bear's beak, is rated as a die or dice, with no modifiers on the roll. Every bonus or penalty represents some way in which the attacker is dealing more or less damage than average, whether it's an innate bonus (such as from Strength) or a learned bonus (such as a fighter's +2 damage bonus for Weapon Specialization).

have that many ranks until 9th-level, and she'd have to spend 12 skill points to buy those six ranks. Nevertheless, a 3rd-level rogue's six ranks work just like the 9th-level wizard's six ranks—they add +6 to the character's Search checks. If a 12th-level rogue has bought no ranks in Search, he's no better at it than any other character with the same Intelligence bonus.

For class skills (such as Wilderness Lore for a ranger), maximum ranks increase by one per level. For cross-class skills (such as Wilderness Lore for a cleric), maximum ranks increase by one-half per level.

checks get harder. Generally, however, a character's best skills are going to get better more quickly than the enemies' skills are, so high-level rogues, for example, have an easier time sneaking around than they did at lower levels.

Some skill DCs are based on spell levels. For example, a rogue has a harder time finding a *greater glyph of warding* (6th-level) than a *standard glyph of warding* (3rd-level). In these cases, the spell's level adds to the DC. Since a character's maximum ranks in a class skill go up by one per level and a spellcaster's maximum spell level goes up by one per two levels, the skill user

GENERALLY, A CHARACTER'S BEST SKILLS WILL IMPROVE MORE QUICKLY THAN AN ENEMIES' SKILLS.

Sometimes you make a skill check against a DC. Most DCs don't go up according to any schedule the way saving throw DCs do. For some skills, the DCs are fixed. The Tumble skill, for example, lets you get past opponents without drawing attacks of opportunity from them with a skill check result of 15. That DC remains the same whether you're tumbling past a goblin or the tarrasque. (Of course, the consequences of failure are higher if you try to tumble past the tarrasque and fail. It gets +5 on its opportunity attack roll, and it deals 4d8+17 damage with its bite.)

Many skill checks are opposed. To succeed with the Move Silently skill, for example, you don't necessarily have to roll very high; you just have to roll higher than the Listen check of the creature you're trying to sneak up on. As characters go up in level, their opponents get tougher, so opposed skill can get ahead of the spellcaster. Generally, an 11th-level rogue has a better chance to find a *greater glyph of warding* cast by an 11th-level cleric than a 5th-level rogue does to find a *standard glyph of warding* cast by a 5th-level cleric. Again, however, the task might be easier, but the consequences of failure are higher. A standard glyph might hit you with *inflict serious wounds* for 3d8+5 damage, while a greater glyph can hit you with a *slay living* spell.

Ability Checks

Ability checks are just like skill checks except that a character doesn't have skill ranks that affect an ability check. As with some skills, such as Hide, size affects certain ability checks. A Small character, for example, suffers a -4 penalty on Strength rolls made to force open doors.

Initiative

Initiative checks are always opposed checks. In combat, you act before everyone whose check you beat and after everyone whose roll beats yours. An initiative check is simply a Dexterity check, except that the feat Improved Initiative gives you a +4 bonus.

Level Checks

Level checks are rare. They basically represent raw tests of power or overall class ability. For instance, a spellcaster makes a caster level check to overcome a creature's spell resistance. Ability scores don't affect level checks.

Turning Undead

A cleric or paladin makes a Charisma check and looks at the Turning Undead table to see whether he can turn the undead confronting him. The character's level doesn't affect the roll, but the result on the Turning Undead table is relative to the character's class level. For instance, a roll of 10 lets a 1st-level cleric turn skeletons, but the same roll of 10 lets a 7th-level cleric turn spectres.

What It All Means

A D&D character sheet has always been a whole mess of numbers. The point of the d20 mechanic is to make as many of those numbers as possible work on the same scale, so that +5 on your attack roll means about the same thing as +5 on a saving throw or +5 on a skill check. (It means "significantly above average but usually within the normal range.") That way, you can see more easily how spells, feats, magic items, and other special circumstances affect your odds, allowing you to spend less time thinking about the numbers and more time playing your character.

Back row: Paul Dawson, Jim Clardy, Andy Cancellieri, Patti O'Connell
Front Row: Patrick Hart, Chris Riedmueller, Kevin Kulp

Standing (left to right): Peggy O'Connell, Dorian Hart, Jim Bologna, Andy Cancelleri, Jeremy Bernstein
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Playtesting Confidential

by Kim Mohan

When the new *Player's Handbook* is released to the world at the GEN CON Game Fair, everyone who has been involved in its creation will be proud of the book. For my part, I'll be especially proud of page 286—the page that lists all the playtesters who helped us make the book as good as it is.

Back in the summer of 1998, we began to assemble a network of external playtesters (people who aren't Wizards of the Coast employees) to help us put the rules through their paces. The playtesters eventually grew to include more than 100 groups comprising close to 600 individuals. Even though not all of those groups were as active as we would have liked them to be, the result was that we got a lot of feedback—positive and negative—on the drafts we sent out.

As the playtest coordinator for the *Player's Handbook* project, I was responsible for communicating with all the groups, receiving their observations and answering their questions, then passing on their feedback to the designers. First, though, we had to identify the groups we would ask to help us.

My first source for potential groups was the RPGA Network. Robert Wiese provided a list of clubs that had playtested smaller projects over the past few years, and those groups gave us a solid foundation. To augment that base, we sent out a feeler on some of the Internet mailing lists devoted to TSR's various campaign worlds. It went something like this: "If you're interested in playtesting a new product, reply to this message and tell us something about you and the other members of your group."

Pretty vague, right? Sure—it had to be vague, because we didn't want anyone on the outside to know exactly what we were working on. Before we could give anyone that information, they had to persuade us that they were "right" for the project. We were looking primarily for groups that consisted of four or more people (three players and a DM) and that could devote at least four hours a week to playtesting. We also wanted a good mix of people who had been playing the AD&D game for a long time along with people who were relatively new to the game.

When we decided to make a commitment to a particular group, we sent that group's contact person (usually the DM) the Wizards of the Coast nondisclosure agreement (NDA). Everyone in the group had to sign a copy of that document and return it—whereupon we would reveal that what we were testing was a new version of the *Player's Handbook*.

The nondisclosure agreement is a legally binding document in which the person signing it promises not to reveal anything about the project he or she is working on to someone who was not involved in the testing—these poor people wouldn't even be able to tell their friends and family that they were helping us produce a new version of the D&D game. I imagine some of them were just dying to tell, but I'm proud to say that we got all the way through the playtest process without a single security leak of any significance. So, what does "of any significance" mean? Well, I'll admit that I did find out about one leak: One of the players in a group from Brazil let it slip, in an email message to one of his friends, that he was a playtester for the *Player's Handbook*. I found out about this message and contacted the player to let him know that he had violated the rules about keeping the project a secret. He apologized and guaranteed me that he had not told anyone else. Just to be safe, I dropped that group from the roster and didn't send them any more information.

That guy from Brazil probably didn't think the news about his innocent message would get all the way to the Wizards of the Coast offices, but nowadays anyone with an email account is just a mouse click away from anyone else in the world. Email was the reason we could even use a playtest group from Brazil in the first place, and the reason we also had playtest groups in Great Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, the island of St. Maarten, Argentina, Norway, and South Korea (in addition to the U.S. and Canada). If we had produced a new edition of the D&D game several years ago, before the proliferation of email, there would have been no easy way to include playtesters from around the world.

When I received all the NDAs for a particular group, I mailed a big package of paper—what we referred to as the "September draft"—to the contact person. Although that draft bears a fundamental similarity to the final version of the book, the designers ended up making literally thousands of particular changes to the rules over the next year and a half. Playtester input was responsible for a good share of those changes. And in some other cases, playtesters helped us to confirm that we were on the right track with a change that the designers had already decided to implement.

THE PLAYTESTERS EVENTUALLY GREW TO INCLUDE MORE THAN 100 GROUPS COMPRISING CLOSE TO 600 INDIVIDUALS.

Let's take one simple but fundamentally critical example: In the new rules, Armor Class starts at 10 and goes up instead of down, so that AC 0 in the 2nd Edition game equates to AC 20 in the new rules. No more THAC0—now, the number you need to roll to hit is simply the AC of the target. This change was a big surprise to most of the playtesters, but at least ninety percent of them immediately saw it as a brilliant idea, and the other ten percent came around pretty quickly once they used the new rule in play. The playtesters gave us all the

Who Were the Playtesters?

Among hundreds of other D&D players, groups run by Kevin Kulp and James Bologna contributed feedback that helped shape the final product. Here are some of their vitals and opinions:

Kevin Kulp
Age: 32
Years Gaming: 18
Quote: "Here come the three hasted hydras!"
On 3rd Edition: It took me quite a while to get over my initial hesitation and suspicion. I loved 2nd Edition, and change is not always good. While the first few versions of the 3rd Edition rules were pretty rough, playtesting has now turned it into a thing of beauty. It's clear that the design team has listened to playtester after playtester, and the game is far better as a result.

James "Body-count" Bologna
Age: 34
Years Gaming: 20
Quote: "Give the party a wrong to right or a monster to battle, and they will band together as one. Give them a tricky political situation or a puzzle with multiple solution paths, and you will have hours of DM amusement."
James's Top 10 reasons for switching to 3rd Edition:

10. Monks are back, and they kick butt!
9. More Hit Points! (You'll see.)
8. "You've only got proficiencies? I've got skills!"
7. I get to move *and* perform an action this round?!
6. Fewer charts, more bonuses!
5. No more "glass-ceiling" restrictions on race!
4. The game designers really listened to the playtesters!
3. Mmmm ... tasty feats!
2. Sorcerers are spell-casting machines!
1. It's all "positive," baby!

Dorian "Game Balance Crusader" Hart
Age: 30
Years Gaming: 21
Quote: "Can we please stop saying the lich's name out loud?"

reinforcement we needed to be sure that this new approach to Armor Class was the way to go.

Of course, while playtesters were picking apart the September draft, the designers weren't just sitting around. Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, and Rich Baker continued to think and rethink the best ways for the rules to accomplish everything they needed to accomplish. (Rich left the design team in late 1998 to take advantage of a different opportunity inside the RPG department, but his influence on the new game is still evident in many places throughout the rules.) Combining early playtester feedback with their own ideas and inspirations, the designers generated the February (1999) draft, and I sent that one out to all the playtest groups.

Because the playtest network had been gradually growing during the period from September 1998 to February 1999—we didn't start out with 100 groups, but we got there eventually—a lot of the groups that received the February draft had not also seen the September draft. That meant we had a nice mix of feedback, with some groups comparing the first draft to the second one (they liked the second one a lot better) and other groups responding as though the February draft was the very first draft (which, for them, it was).

We tried something new with the February draft—making the manuscript available in electronic form. Everyone who was authorized to see the material received the URL of a secure website and a unique password that they had to key in to get access to where the downloadable files were waiting.

Every downloaded file was tagged with that same password, so that if any of the information happened to find its way onto the Internet, we would be able to identify the group responsible.

All the playtesters were told about this security system, of course—it was our responsibility to make sure they understood that confidentiality was of the utmost importance.

The system worked beautifully. Everyone who wanted to download the material could get access in a matter of minutes rather than waiting days (or weeks, in the case of the overseas groups) for a package of paper to arrive. We also used the secure website to disseminate files of errata—patches that the designers came up with over the next few months to replace or supplement parts of the rules they had decided to change.

THE SYSTEM WORKED BEAUTIFULLY. EVERYONE WHO WANTED TO DOWNLOAD THE MATERIAL COULD GET ACCESS IN MINUTES.

For the most part, the playtest feedback process was open-ended: We sent out the material and asked everyone to share whatever observations they wanted to make. What we got back was several hundred thousand words of criticism running the gamut from "This rule is great" to "This rule stinks," with a whole lot of "This rule isn't bad, but here's how I would do it instead." Very little of the feedback was frivolous or downright dumb—remember, we screened these groups carefully to be sure we weren't soliciting input from crackpots or people with not-so-hidden agendas. Sure, some people had causes they wanted to champion; for instance, a couple of groups wanted us to completely change the alignment system, which we did not do. But that doesn't take away from the fact that those people presented their cases reasonably and logically. It hasn't happened yet as far as I know, but I wouldn't be surprised if some of our playtesters end up getting jobs as game designers—they were that good.

To supplement the open-ended feedback, the design team had me send out a couple of surveys—lists of questions they wanted answered by all the testers. For instance, we wanted to know what everyone thought about the system for generating ability scores (roll 4d6, drop the lowest result). Almost all of the groups had no problem with this rule, although some also wanted alternative methods. The number of groups that didn't like this system, or that thought it shouldn't be the only way of generating the scores,

was not large enough to make us decide to do it differently—and that's something we wouldn't have been sure about if we hadn't asked everyone.

The playtest project officially ended when we made the Big Announcement at last year's Gen Con Game Fair. Now the world knew that a new edition of the D&D game was on the way, and it was okay for playtesters to tell other people what they had been working on for us—although they couldn't go into detail about specific aspects of the new rules. (If we give away some details, as we've been doing in *Dragon Magazine*, on our website, and in other places, that's okay, but the playtesters are still bound by the terms of the NDA until the book comes out.)

I say "officially ended," because in fact we're hearing from playtesters even as I write this (mid-February, 2000). Shortly after last year's convention, we produced yet another design draft, and I sent it out to a select number of groups—those who had been the most active over the past year—so that we could continue to get feedback on small-scale matters while the design was being wrapped up and the editing was taking place.

I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF SOME OF OUR PLAYTESTERS END UP GETTING JOBS AS GAME DESIGNERS—THEY WERE THAT GOOD.

Administering the playtest operation has been a true labor of love for me (with mild emphasis on "labor"). I've made a lot of new friends, and my deep respect for the people who play this game—and love this game—has grown even deeper. In a very real sense, a little piece of the *Player's Handbook* belongs to each one of the playtesters who helped us create the best roleplaying game I've ever seen.

On 3rd Edition: You have to respect the design team for having the guts to rethink the game mechanics from the ground up rather than just tweaking the previous version. They kept everything that makes it D&D: the class-based system, spells with the name "Bigby" in them, the trusty 20-sider, the six canonical stats, and numerous other "signature aspects." Bravo!

Jeremy "Darrrrh!" Bernstein
Age: 25
Years Gaming: 22 (Yes, he's been gaming since age 3.)
Quote: "Darrrrh! Pirates love a good evocation spell!"
On 3rd Edition: This is about as different a system as one can manage while still bearing the name "D&D," and in all the best ways. The new system is logical and consistent in pretty much all its aspects, much more intuitive than it used to be. Also, the new *chain lightning* rocks!

Tonia R. Lopez-Fresquet
Age: 26
Years Gaming: 15
On 3rd Edition: This game is much more coherent and consistent than 2nd Edition, and easier to use and more flexible. This is the rebuild the rules needed. Kudos to the design team for being willing to redesign from the base up. The multiclass rules are excellent. Combined with looser alignment restrictions, a new skill system, and the feats, they let you really customize a character. And I love playing a sorcerer/rogue!

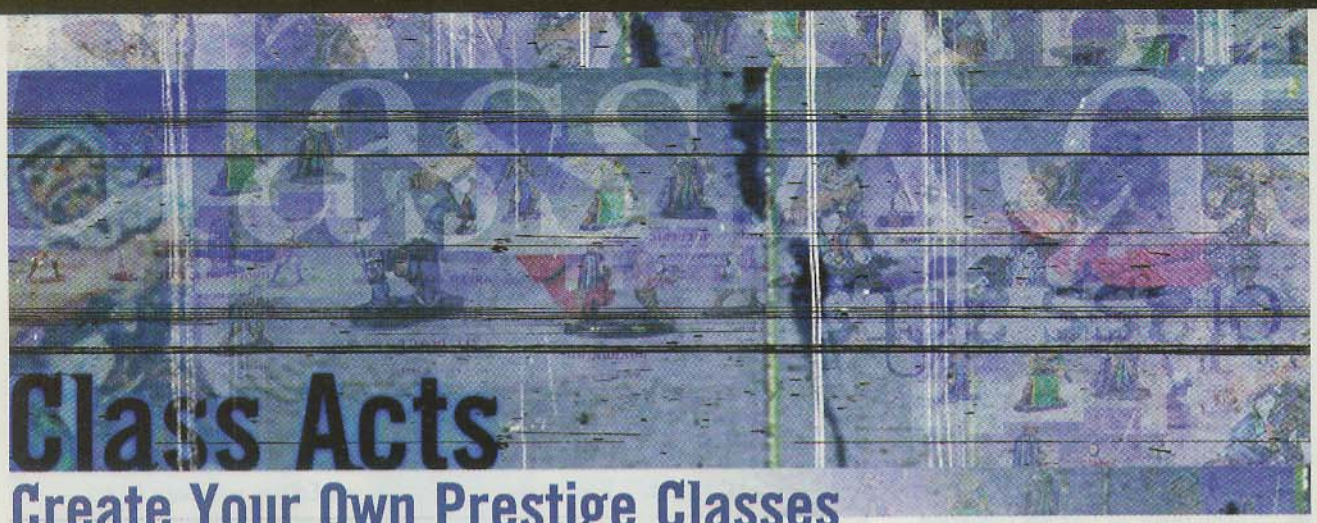
Chris "Blame Canada" Riedmueller
Age: 29
Years Gaming: 18
Quote: "Mayhap we should knock?"
On 3rd Edition: In 2nd Edition, combat, spells, saving throws, and proficiencies worked well enough unto themselves, but each had its own mechanic. The 3rd Edition applies a common mechanic to each of these aspects, giving the final product a more consistent and unified feel. With fewer charts to consult, the result is a more intuitive game with improved pacing that is easier than ever to learn. With better game mechanics there's more room for better roleplaying.

Patricia "Group Damage Sponge" O'Connell
Age: 26
Years Gaming: 7
On 3rd Edition: The streamlining of combat, with one initative roll, 6-second combat rounds, and no more spell or weapon speeds, makes for a more exciting and up-tempo play. I think 3rd Edition will make D&D more accessible and less daunting to get started in. Being the newest gamer in the group, I spent a lot of time playing catch-up on game mechanics in 2nd edition, but with 3rd Edition everyone caught on very quickly.

Peggy O'Connell
Age: 31
Years Gaming: 17
Quote: "That's evil in my book. Of course, my book has small words and a lot of pictures ..."
On 3rd Edition: I like the new system's integrity. While it is not a simple system, the designers have tried very hard to maintain a simple set of core principles. Call it the "New VW Bug of AD&D," and you won't be too far off.

Andrew Cancellieri
Age: 35
Years Gaming: 19
Quote: "Dazzle the enemy with your natural prowess, then kick in the magic."
On 3rd edition: It's simpler in many ways, streamlined, with much greater character flexibility.

Paul Dawson
Age: 31
Years Gaming: 22
Quote: "Allow me to be your manager, for a mere 60% of your income."
On 3rd Edition: Now, just because there are two characters of the same class in a party doesn't mean that they are going to be identical, as it has been more often the case in the past. Advancing a level also means more as well. Once the new system has been played, its hard to go back.



Class Acts

Create Your Own Prestige Classes

by Monte Cook

Prestige classes are special classes found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Players cannot choose these classes for beginning characters—only advanced characters can take prestige classes, and they must meet certain requirements unique to the class to do so. Characters who qualify can choose a prestige class as a multiclass to pick up as they advance in level.

Prestige classes allow DMs to create campaign-specific, exclusive roles and positions as classes. These special roles offer abilities and powers otherwise inaccessible to PCs and focus them in interesting directions. A character with a prestige class becomes more specialized yet perhaps slightly better than one without the prestige class.

Abilities granted by prestige classes are appropriate for mid- to high-level characters. Characters can acquire prestige classes by meeting the requirements specific to each example, which usually means that a character must be at least mid-level (say, around 5th or 6th). Additionally, a character might also need to meet non-rules related requirements, such as special training exercises, quests, group membership fees, and so forth.

Prestige classes are purely optional and always under the purview of the DM. The prestige classes presented in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* are only the beginning; they aren't all-encompassing or definitive. They might not even be right for your campaign. In your game, the best prestige classes are the ones you create yourself.

Chapter 2 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* introduces prestige classes, including the assassin, blackguard, dwarven defender, arcane archer, and shadowdancer. Look for it in September.

Why Create a Prestige Class?

There are four basic reasons why you should create prestige classes for your campaign.

1 Give 'Em What They Want

A player with a ranger character wants to be an expert archer, so he takes Point Blank Shot and other appropriate feats. After all that, he wants to do even more with his bow. He's willing to sacrifice other aspects of his character to do so, but there don't seem to be options for him. In response, you create an organization called the Order of the Bow, and the player's character joins. There, he learns of a number of trick shots and special bow-related abilities by taking levels in the Order of the Bow prestige class.

Players often desire abilities for their characters that extend beyond the bounds of the *Player's Handbook*. That's okay. Prestige classes provide a way for you to develop rules within a balanced format to satisfy your players' concepts of their characters. You might even allow players to develop their own prestige classes, as long as you approve of the design.

2 Define Your Organizations

You've already created the Order of the Bow, a group of fighters, rangers, and rogues who help defend the capital in times of distress. They have a good reputation and a long, honorable history. To develop the organization further, you create a prestige class with abilities unique to the Order. Now, when people speak of their almost unnatural prowess, there are concrete facts pertaining to exactly what they can actually do.

Prestige classes can define monastic orders, secret cabals, religious zealots, thieves' guilds, special military units, people trained under a specific teacher, sorcerers from a particular area, or bards who studied at the same college. If you're not already creating organizations like this in your campaign, you should be. If you are, use prestige classes to distinguish them from one another. If the wizards of the Inverted Pyramid know different spells and have different abilities from the wizards of the Open Hand Guild, it makes both groups—and your campaign as a whole—much more interesting.

Using prestige classes with campaign organizations also encourages PCs to join or at least investigate these groups.

PRESTIGE CLASSES OFFER SPECIAL ABILITIES TO PCS AND FOCUS THEM IN INTERESTING DIRECTIONS.

In the D&D game, any character can multiclass. See Chapter 3 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Prestige classes offer you a way to use the rules to draw players into your campaign world and involve them in whatever sorts of politics, intrigues, and adventures you have in store.

3 Describe Your Cultures

Like organizations, races and cultures can benefit from having specific rules to showcase their abilities. While each race is detailed in the *Player's Handbook* with different abilities to make them unique, some prestige classes in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, such as the arcane archer and the dwarven defender, help demonstrate how—through the rules—each race fits their own archetypes standardized in so many campaign worlds and fantasy traditions. You could easily create many more such prestige classes. The dwarven smith, the halfling hill-scout, the half-orc demolisher—these are just some of the racial archetypes to embrace.

While it's fine to say things like "elves operate well in the woods," or "gnomes are tricky," such statements are always more powerful if there are rules to back them up. Prestige classes (the elven woodstalker and the gnome trickster, for example) provide those rules.

IMAGINE A PRESTIGE CLASS THAT ENABLES A CHARACTER TO ENTANGLE FOES WITH HIS WHIP... SUDDENLY, THE WHIP BECOMES AN INTERESTING CHOICE.

Cultures can benefit from prestige classes perhaps most of all. There are no D&D game rules for how the people from the Southern Kingdom in your campaign differ from the folk of the Direwood Forest. With prestige classes, you can define how the southern spear-dancers have a completely different fighting style from that of the hardy, no-nonsense Direwood rangers. Culture-based prestige classes can tie into PC backgrounds. Only characters from the Sunlost Desert can take the knife-fighter prestige class, for instance. Unique prestige classes can make every populated place that you create for your campaign truly special.

4 Make Lame Options Exciting

A prestige class can take an otherwise questionable choice, such as specializing in the whip, and make it worthwhile. Imagine a prestige class that enables a character to entangle foes with his whip, gaining a bonus to trip and disarm maneuvers, and granting special damage bonuses with the weapon. Suddenly, the whip becomes an interesting weapon choice.

You can create prestige classes that grant interesting abilities for people spending a lot of skill points on Innuendo, Intimidation, or the Knowledge or Craft skill. Characters who choose strange multiclass combinations, put their best score in Charisma, or choose to be from a weak race like goblins or kobolds could all have access to prestige classes involving those choices that make them worthwhile.

Choose the Specific Over the General

When designing prestige classes for your campaign, you have an advantage that no one else has—that no game designer can ever have. You know the specific details of your campaign. Use that knowledge to its fullest by ignoring the general and embracing the specific. You're not creating a prestige class for everyone's campaign, just for yours.

Give your prestige classes names and abilities that take advantage of the work you've put into your game world.

Too General	Campaign-Specific
Holy Warrior	Champion of Pelor
City Guardsman	Greyhawk Watchman
Martial Disciple	Order of the Fist Disciple
Woodsman	Darkwater Pass Tracker

Designing Requirements

All prestige class requirements are based around the idea that the character who qualifies for the class is already well on his way to becoming someone who can do the things that the prestige class excels in. Those qualifying for the Misty Peaks mountaineer prestige class should already have 6 ranks in Climb and 4 in Use Rope.

Consider two types of requirements when determining who can take a prestige class:

- **Game requirements** are hard-and-fast rules, often numerical values. These are the best requirements for maintaining game balance.

- **Character requirements** are aspects of a character, like race, age, and religion, as well as deeds she might have accomplished. For example, the hunter of the dead prestige class, which specializes in fighting undead, must have had a negative level inflicted by an energy draining undead. Sometimes these are simply roleplaying hooks that tie into the organization or culture that a prestige class represents, like pledging allegiance to a monarch, paying initial membership dues, or performing a specific religious rite.

Don't be afraid of non-game mechanics requirements, for they can add life to a prestige class. On the other hand, never use them for game balance purposes. Granting a character a bonus feat just for keeping his head shaved is a recipe for rules abuse.

No requirement should be based on a die roll. That means that ability scores (or ability score bonuses), hit points, or other aspects of a character that are determined by a die should not be used as a prestige class requirement. Requirements should be based on player choices—feats, skill ranks, and so on.

Further, no prestige class should be set up specifically for members of a regular class. Class and level are not good requirements. That said, once you assign a set number of ranks, feats, and so on as requirements, it's not difficult to figure out which class can meet those requirements at what level. The assassin prestige class in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, for example, can be attained the quickest by rogues (at 5th level), but even wizards could potentially meet the requirements (at 13th level). No prestige

class should be attainable by a character lower than 5th level.

Designing Abilities

Every level should include some significant benefit. Remember that your player should feel good that she took a level in the prestige class rather than just sticking with her original class. Spellcasters specifically have a difficult time justifying missing out on the new spells they gain with each level, so prestige classes aimed at them must be particularly attractive. The first ability or abilities gained should be matched to the minimum level that a character could possibly qualify for the class.

Thus, if a ranger can qualify for the class at 5th level, the first level of the prestige class should be approximately equivalent of the 6th level a ranger might gain.

Much of the trick of balancing prestige class levels involves small issues: base attack increases, Hit-Die size, and even weapon and armor proficiency can be strong enticements to take a level in the prestige class. Remember that gaining proficiency in weapons or armor is like gaining free feats.

Major abilities, particularly new powers, should be carefully considered. They should never be more powerful or useful than the types of things that other classes can do. Look at existing class abilities, feats, and the prestige classes in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for ideas. It's okay to borrow directly from the abilities of other classes when designing a prestige class, though it's much more interesting to create something truly unique.

Spells and Spell Lists

Spellcasting prestige classes should each have their own spell list. Choose spells appropriate to the class, and perhaps even make some new, signature spells. Keep the spell list relatively short, however; not every spellcaster needs a *fireball* spell.

A prestige class spell list should have the spells appropriate for the class and no more. For a wide variety of spells, a character can take a level in the wizard or cleric class.

Occasionally, if a spell is a "signature" spell of a prestige class, you can lower the level that the class gets the spell by one. For example, for a flame mage prestige class, *wall of fire* might be considered a 3rd-level rather than a 4th-level spell. This technique should be used sparingly. Do this only once or twice for a given class, if at all. Normally, if a class has other attractive powers or benefits, it's not necessary.

Special Considerations

Prestige classes tied to organizations might have ongoing requirements. These can include assignments, dues, personal sacrifices of wealth, or obedience. Becoming a member of a prestige class might involve becoming an apprentice for a time to another member, or eventually taking on a prospective member as an apprentice to the PC.

Entry into a prestige class might come with "strings attached." Powerful enemies seek members out, or those among the group's ranks must face the prejudices of the local folk. Membership in some prestige classes might even be illegal—sometimes knowledge is forbidden. These "strings" can come along with prestige classes that are tied to a specific group in the campaign world, or they can be tied to prestige classes that simply deal with knowledge. The dragonslayers might not be a formal organization, but their reputation precedes them nonetheless.

Use prestige classes as a tool to individualize and invigorate your campaign.

DON'T BE AFRAID OF NON-GAME MECHANIC REQUIREMENTS, FOR THEY CAN ADD LIFE TO A PRESTIGE CLASS.

Character Requirements

Some rules requirements help define the prestige class but aren't as useful for game balance.

- Race
- Alignment
- Age
- Religion
- Accomplishments

Rule Requirements

The most important requirements for a prestige class are based on a character's capabilities as defined by rules, especially numerical values.

- Skill Ranks
- Feats (including a specific weapon proficiency or specialization)
- Base Attack Bonus
- Special Abilities (such as evasion, rage, or turning undead)
- Spellcasting ability (often specific to a few spells)

Poor Requirements (Do not use)

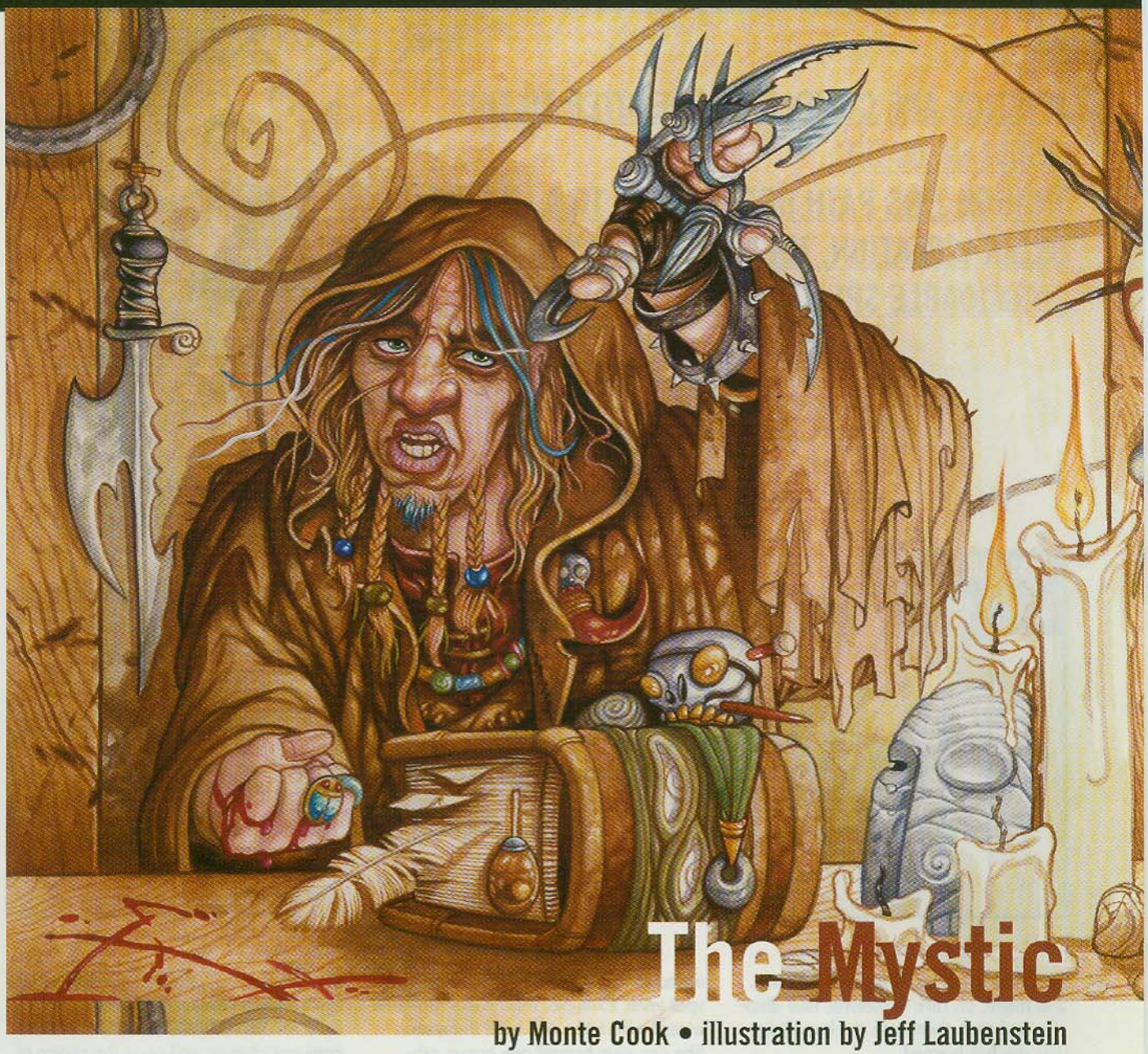
These requirements are bad because they depend on random die rolls or other quantities that have little to do with a player's decisions:

- Level
- Character Class
- Ability Score
- Modified Attack Roll
- Hit Points
- Armor Class
- Total Skill Bonus

Non-Rule Requirements

Requirements based on a character's actions don't contribute to game balance, but they are great for atmosphere and color.

- Kill a specific monster
- Visit a hard-to-reach shrine
- Endure an ordeal of pain
- Retrieve a rare herb
- Complete an individualized quest
- Perform an impossible task (walk on water, capture the breath of a bird)
- Win a race, a duel, or some other contest
- Discover the secret password
- Impress an important person with words and wit
- Create a great work of art—a song, a dance, a painting
- Solve a riddle
- Get a specific tattoo
- Always wear a specific color
- Always tell the truth
- Perform some daily ritual



The Mystic

by Monte Cook • illustration by Jeff Laubenstein

With so many distractions in the world, like combat training, learning the art of stealth, or studying interesting bits of history, it's easy for a spellcaster to stray from the art of magic. A few dedicated individuals manage to focus on spells above all else. Magic is their meat and drink—the very air they breathe. ***Welcome to the world of the mystic.***

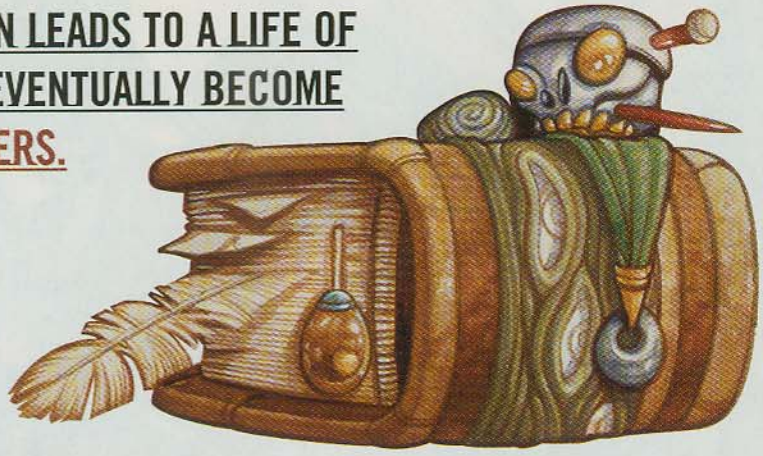
Mystics are spellcasters who focus solely on the pursuit of magic. Only the most diligent student of the magical arts joins the ranks of the mystics, who reward the hard work and study of devoted spellcasters with secrets of magic unavailable elsewhere. Characters without at least one level of wizard, sorcerer, cleric, or druid gain almost no benefit from becoming a mystic. Paladins, rangers, and bards might gain some benefit, but overall, it would be minor.

Mystics often gather in isolated covens or secluded ascetic orders to harbor their secrets and emphasize their studies. Mystics study magic for magic's sake and become formidable spellcasters because of it. Sometimes a lone mystic removes herself even from the company

Requirements

- Spellcraft Ranks: 10
- Knowledge (arcana) Ranks: 10
- Knowledge (religion) Ranks: 5
- Heroic Feats:
  Spell Penetration, Spell Focus, one metamagic feat, and one item creation feat

MYSTICS ARE COMPLETELY DEVOTED TO THE STUDY OF MAGIC. THOUGH THIS PATH OFTEN LEADS TO A LIFE OF UTTER ISOLATION, THEY EVENTUALLY BECOME FORMIDABLE SPELLCASTERS.



Mystic (Hit Die: d6)

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Bonus Spells	Class Skills
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Spell secret	2	*2 + Int mod/level*
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Bonus language	3	Alchemy (Int)
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	Spell secret	2	Concentration (Con)
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	Bonus language	3	Craft (Int)
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	Spell secret	2	Knowledge (any) (Int)
6	+3	+2	+2	+5	Bonus language	3	Scry (Int, exclusive skill)
7	+3	+2	+2	+5	Spell secret	2	Spellcraft (Int)
8	+4	+2	+2	+6	Permanent maximum, bonus language	3	
9	+4	+3	+3	+6	Spell secret	2	
10	+5	+3	+3	+7	Permanent quicken, bonus language	3	

of her peers to study in utter isolation. She might, on rare occasions, take disciples and train them with the knowledge that she has learned.

Class Features

- **Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Mystics are not skilled with any weapons, armor, or shields.
- **Bonus Spells:** Similar to bonus spells for high ability scores, for each level of mystic that a spellcasting character attains, she gains bonus spells to the number of spells per day she normally casts. These bonus spells can be added to whatever levels of spells the caster can currently cast, but no more than one can be added to the caster's highest current spell level. Example: Mialee is a 9th-level wizard who takes one level in mystic. She can give herself one bonus 5th-level spell (her highest as a 9th-level wizard), and one bonus spell in one other level, zero through fourth.

If a mystic has two spellcasting classes already, he must choose which previous class of spells gains the bonus. For example, Unthor is a 10th-level cleric/9th-level wizard, with one level of mystic. Conceivably, Unthor could have a bonus 5th-level wizard spell and a bonus 5th-level cleric spell, or you could put both spells in either cleric or wizard, but only one of them could be 5th level. Once a mystic has chosen how to apply his bonus spells, they cannot be shifted again.

- **Spell Secret:** At every other level, mystics can choose one spell known to them that then becomes permanently modified as though affected by one of the following metamagic feats: Empower Spell, Enlarge Spell, Extend Spell, Still Spell, or Silent Spell. The spell's level does not change, and once the choice of spell and modification are chosen, they cannot be changed. As the mystic goes up in level, he can choose the same spell to be modified in different ways with multiple spell secrets.
- **Bonus Languages:** Mystics, in their laborious studies, learn new languages to access more knowledge. The mystic can choose to learn any new language every two levels.
- **Permanent Maximum:** Like with spell secrets, at 8th level the mystic can choose one spell to permanently modify so that it is always maximized as with the metamagic feat Maximize Spell.
- **Permanent Quicken:** Like with spell secrets, at 10th level the mystic can choose one spell to permanently modify so that it is always quickened as with the metamagic feat Quicken Spell. D

The D&D Movie: Justin Whalin

Ridley Scoffs at Danger

by Cory Herndon

The 26-year-old, Emmy-award-winning Justin Whalin stars in this summer's DUNGEONS & DRAGONS flick as Ridley, a young thief who sneaks his way into the machinations of Jeremy Irons's malevolent wizard Profion. He's been linked to the project longer than any other actor, and at the time of this interview was actually working with director Corey Solomon on the extensive post-production for the film.

POINTED EXPERIENCE

Despite his age, Whalin is a 15-year veteran of show business, and in that time he has taken on some unusual roles. "I played a sexually perverse teenager in *Serial Mom*, a Jon Waters flick," he recalls. "I was the mad masturbator. And I did *Child's Play 3* when I was like, 15, 16 years old."

Before those memorable roles however, Whalin did *General Hospital* for a year, then *Charles in Charge*, and "a lot of TV movies of the week." He won his Emmy for a TV movie called *The Other Mothers*.

"I had fifteen movies of the week, four series, and several features. [In] most of the parts I've played, I'm either the lead or I'm the sidekick. I say sidekick because of Jimmy Olsen. I loved doing *Lois and Clark*." After the Superman series was cancelled, he did one more TV movie: a film called *Miracle at Midnight* with Mia Farrow and Sam Waterston. Then came the audition for D&D in November of 1997.

"I got the part then—at the time it was going to be done through Universal—but that kind of fell apart. But it was a movie that I wanted to do right away when I read the script. I was lucky I could kind of hang out and wait around for it to get greenlit." Whalin says he felt that the timing for D&D was perfect. "It was something that I thought was really original. I think it's only recently that we can create that fantasy world on film without having to spend 200 to 300 million dollars to do it. It's still an expensive undertaking, but it's possible now."

GAMING SESSIONS

No doubt every actor in this film has been asked whether he or she plays the D&D game. Whalin's experience with D&D began on the sidelines. "When I was younger, I didn't play D&D, but most of the kids in the grades above me did. So I watched a lot of people play, but I never actually played it myself. I was a little bit young for it." Later on, he played computer games like *Warcraft* and *Baldur's Gate*™. But when production on the film finally began, he hit the hobby shop. "I went back and bought a bunch of D&D books and sat in on games—having not seen a game in 15 years."

Unlike many gamers, though, Whalin is a bit mysterious when it comes to describing his character. "Ridley's a thief. You don't know a lot about Ridley when you first meet him, and I don't know how much we want to give away at this point." Both Whalin and director Corey Solomon, however, have hinted that there is much more to Ridley than first meets the eye. In fact, at first "Ridley" wasn't even his name,

the actor recalls. "When I first got the part, the character's name was Corwin ... but that's from a totally different script. It was a rewritten version of the original, trimmed down so the budget of the film didn't have to be astronomical. Eventually we used the original, untrimmed script."

Like any dashing rogue, Ridley has a partner in crime: Marlon Wayans's Snails. "Marlon was great, I loved working with him," he says. "I auditioned with a bunch of the people who were auditioning [for the role of Snails], since I'd already been cast. And of course Marlon didn't need to audition. We went to lunch and hit it off right away. We were instantly buddies. That's really luck." Whalin believes that one of the hardest, yet most important, things in the movie was making the relationship between Ridley and Snails feel as though they've known each other forever. "Because they're orphans, really the only family they've ever had is each other. They have to feel like they have that history together, and Marlon and I found that very easy to do."

SPELL EFFECTS

Whalin's time with Solomon in post-production has left the actor in awe of the work that's been accomplished and the work that has yet to be done. "There's somewhere around 500 visual effect shots in the film, I think. And they're not matte paintings. They're 3D." Naturally, a lot of times he had to act against "dragons-on-a-stick." The effects work caused its share of headaches for the actor, too.

"In the final sequence, the soundstage we were on was surrounded by a 200 foot blue screen that completely encircled us. You work on that for about two and half weeks, 15 hours a day, with this fluorescent blue lighting, and it can drive you a bit mad."

D&tD is an action movie, and Whalin

THE D&D CARTOON: THE LEGACY

Sure, D&tD the movie promises to break new ground. But is it truly possible to compare the dramatic action of the big screen D&tD to the under-animated cartoon adventures of Hank, Bobby, Presto, and little Uni the Unicorn? Man, we hope so. First up, we compare the two "leading men" of each ensemble.

HERO VS. HERO	Hank	Ridley
Class	Ranger, presumably because someone at the network thought the term "fighter" would encourage violence in schools.	Thief. Or maybe it's rogue. What edition are we up to now?
Weapon of choice	Magical bow with big flamin' arrows.	Basic longsword.
Love Interest	Shiela, a female thief—although Uni the Unicorn's lawsuit is still pending.	Marina, a female mage—although she hates his guts, and he isn't too keen on mages.
Fashion Sense	Rugged brown leather, questionable green tights, muy macho boots. Willie Aames, who voiced the role, also apparently lent his hair to the part.	Leather pants, leather jacket, leather boots, leather gloves, and belts, belts, belts! All that and a much better haircut than Hank or Jimmy Olsen.
Wound up in this crazy mess by...	Hopping on a trans-dimensional amusement park ride that drops you into a fantasy role-playing world.	Breaking into the wrong place at the wrong time and getting caught by the wrong people.
Fights at the behest of...	Dungeon Master, a li'l dude who looks like Yoda in a man-suit.	Empress Savina, who looks like Kevin Spacey's daughter from *American Beauty*.
Hates...	Venger, evil wizard with one horn.	Profion, evil wizard with no horns.
If D&tD were Star Wars, he'd be...	Luke, after rescuing the Princess but before blowing up the Death Star.	Han Solo from those old Brian Daley novels.
In a fair fight between the two, he'd...	Probably get spanked with his magic bow... for starters.	Commence with the spanking, then move on to step two.

AND THE WINNER...

...as you might imagine, turns out to be Ridley! But don't fret for Hank—believe it or not, the *Dungeons & Dragons* cartoon is back on Saturday morning TV. Check those local listings, and don't say we didn't warn you about the green tights.

performed many of his own stunts at the encouragement of his director. "Corey's a very good convincer. We tease Corey about it all the time." He then switches to a dead-on impression of Solomon: "'Whaddaya mean you don't wannna jump off that roof? It's only 400 feet! What are you whining about?'"

SUFFERING FOR HIS ART

Whalin can't recall exactly when he received one of his worst on-set injuries. "To be honest, I really don't know when I broke it. There was one stunt with Jeremy [Irons], and I hit the tip of my finger against a wall, just kind of smushed it. Then the next thing that day, Bruce Payne and I are doing a sword fight, and the sword landed on my finger."

One might assume that bruiser Bruce Payne did the finger-busting, but Whalin insists that Irons' character shouldn't be underestimated just because he's a wizard. "Don't think light of Jeremy. He's right out there in the middle of things." And Irons and Whalin aren't the only ones. "I broke one of the stunt guy's noses punching him in the face." At this, Whalin laughs wickedly, then quickly composes himself. "But then I felt horrible about it, it really was not very funny at all. He didn't care, I guess because he was used to it."

Injuries aside, Whalin remembers one sequence as the most dangerous thing he did on the shoot. "We were trying to get this shot where I have to avoid this axe that's suspended on rigging made of metal. The blade is made out of wood, with Styrofoam tips, but the thing still weighed about five to six hundred pounds, and it was dropped from above." Naturally, Solomon decided a shot was needed with the heroic Ridley leaping out of the way of the dread blade. "We'd worked out a little system where I'd say something, they'd drop it, and I'd jump out of the way. And after looking at it a couple of times, we realized that the problem was that I was out of the shot before the axe was entering the shot. It looked like it was missing me by too much."

Whalin suggested that both he and the axe needed to be in the frame at the same time, "and this was probably the one time I made a suggestion to do something that was probably not so safe," he insists. "Corey wasn't going to ask me to do it. So we did it, and I

turned around and I signaled them to drop it, and this thing ... well, I'd never really stood in front of it when it was really moving, and it missed me by half an inch." Although the resulting shot was "fantastic," he remembers, "Had I not moved in time, I would've probably broken every rib in my body. It was just about the stupidest thing you could possibly do, and I volunteered for it." Solomon was also happy with the results, once he saw Whalin was okay. Again, Whalin slips into his Solomon impression: "'He's FINE, he's great! Look at 'im, he's fiiine! Look, he's not hurt! The shot's great!'"

REALITY CZECH

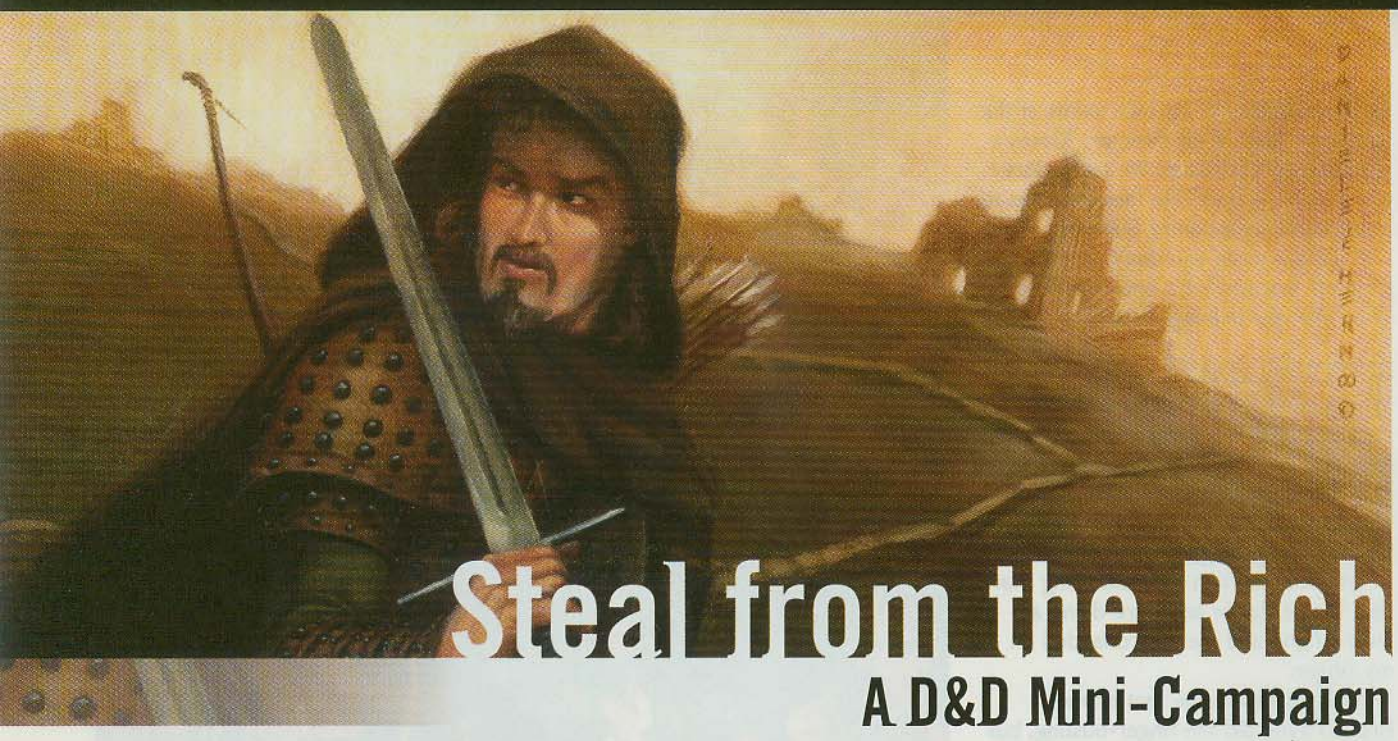
Whalin was fascinated by Prague, where the film was shot. "We went from side to side and used every bit of it. I was there for four or five months. We used the city itself, and we used castles. Prague itself is right out of a storybook. It's not only not modern looking, it's baroque." The architecture leant unique qualities to the mage city of Sumdall. "There were these chapels we used that took five or six generations to build, that are all marble and gold inside, you could never reproduce that. You could never build a set that looks like that. We got really lucky."

Like Solomon, Whalin is gung-ho to continue working in the realm of Izmer. If the first film is a success, sequels are definitely in the future. Whalin is optimistic. "I don't want to jinx anything, but I can't see this movie not doing well. If I wasn't in this movie, I'd want to go see it. That's part of the reason I wanted to do it in the first place.

"The movie's not trying to be the game, it takes the world from the game and builds a story within that world." Whalin insists this would not have been possible if the film hadn't been independently produced. "A lot of the control really stayed in Corey's hands. There was no studio giving us money, no one looking over our shoulder saying 'maybe you should do this or that.'" That can hurt a film, Whalin says, "Because the people making those comments don't know filmmaking or the game."

ON THE HORIZON

For now, Whalin seems content to focus on Ridley, the D&D movie, and the films that might well be coming in the future. Like many actors, he's also interested in directing and has picked up a few things from Solomon. "Right now, I'm just hanging out with Corey and working on post-production for this film. Corey's been letting me learn a lot. I've been in this business fifteen years, and no one's ever kept me around for the whole process. Corey's an incredibly driven guy. I've worked with a lot of first-time directors, and we really enjoyed working together. I'm sure we will again."



Steal from the Rich

A D&D Mini-Campaign

by Ian Malcolmson • illustrated by Stephen Daniele & John Hermanowski

"Robyn was a proude outlawe, Whyles he walked on grounde,
So curteyse an outlawe as he was one
Was never none yfounde"
–from A Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode,
15th-century English collection of ballads

Every English child knows the story of Robin Hood, and a goodly proportion of children around the world have also become fascinated by his brave deeds, his romance with the Lady Marian, and his battles against the vile Sheriff of Nottingham through the many novels, ballads, dances, movies, TV shows, cartoons, and songs that have borne his name.

This and following articles show you how to bring Sherwood and the England of Robin Hood to your D&D game. Heft thy bow, fair reader, for there is fortune to be made 'neath the mighty boughs of Sherwood.

Ye Olde Englande of Robyn Hode

In 1066, the Normans conquered a nation that, although unified in name, was more a scattered collection of holdings separated by tracts of wilderness that made administration a huge problem. By introducing a feudal system to these holdings, they sought to ease this difficulty. Further, by carrying out the grand survey recorded in the Domesday Book, the Norman regime gained more knowledge of their subject kingdom than had any of the Saxon rulers before them.

Some areas, particularly those of the Midlands and northward, held particular problems. Here, even in the time of Richard I, anti-Norman sentiment among the Saxon populace was rife. The only manner the Norman nobility found to suppress such bad feeling (which occasionally gave way to open rebellion) was to enforce their authority by martial and oppressive means.

When Henry II died in 1189, the English people held high hopes that they would finally have a king who would instigate a more benign reign. Unfortunately the new king, Richard "Coeur de Lion," was less interested in administering his kingdom than in seeking glorious conquest. He ruled for just over a decade, of which he spent only six months on English soil.

Instead of enjoying a benificent reign under Richard, the English found themselves governed by his weak brother, John. During his regency, John did nothing to ease the plight of the common folk—in fact, things probably became worse than they ever had been. John gave in to his favorites, granting them land and power to gain the support he felt he needed to usurp the throne from his brother, caring little for the difficulties and hardships suffered by the peasantry. John never succeeded in his plots, but he eventually became king upon Richard's death in 1199.

Despite his absence from English shores—or perhaps because of it—Richard was a popular figure among peasants and certain nobles who disliked John's rule. A popular belief was that, once he returned from the various wars, Richard would bring England into a new era of glory and honor.

Such was not to be. In the year of his coronation, Richard joined the Third Crusade, which lasted until 1192. In that year, on his way home, he was captured by Duke Leopold of Austria, who handed Richard to Henry VI, the Holy Roman Emperor. Henry demanded a large ransom for Richard's release. The kingly sum was finally paid in 1194, and Richard returned to England to find John leading an insurrection against him. Quickly putting John back into his place, Richard was not long in finding another war, this time against Philip II of France. Richard's campaign against the French, beginning in 1194, ended with his death from wounds

Whither Robyn?

The earliest tales of Robin Hood date back to the 13th century, in the oral traditions of England. The earliest printed chronicles of the hero date from the mid- to late-14th century, including a mention in Langland's *Vision of Piers Plowman* (1377). The most famous early version of Robin's tale appears in a collection of ballads called *A Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode* (circa 1489), in which the legend begins to assume its familiar form.

Whether Robin actually existed is a moot point. There are several candidates on record who could have been our hero, but it is more likely that the tales represent an amalgamation of the escapades of several different individuals over a period of many years. Although such history is interesting to those wishing to explore Robin Hood in detail, creating a heroic Robin campaign that is historically correct is nigh impossible. Besides, legends are much more exciting.

Each DM can choose the level of "historical accuracy" to include in the campaign, which can range from the realistic to the fabulous.

The Historical Campaign

DMs and players who appreciate historical novels and films might want to make their D&D adventures as realistic as possible. In these campaigns, players should choose only human characters of fighter or rogue class. Neither divine nor arcane magic exists in such a world, and the PCs will face human and animal opponents—never such incredible beasts as wyverns and goblins. The rewards of an historical campaign are great for players with a love of history, intrigue, and human drama.

The Legendary Campaign

On the surface, legendary Sherwood seems like the real England, but magic lingers in the deep shadows of the forest. Magic and monsters should be rare and fleeting. A unicorn should be glimpsed from a distance but never caught. Friar Tuck is a spellcasting cleric in a legendary campaign, and Richard is a paladin.

If the heroes fight an owlbear summoned by an evil wizard, no one believes their tale of it. To keep magic mysterious, perhaps arcane spells function only at night, or perhaps only near such mystical sites as the Nine Ladies or Major Oak.

The Fantasy Campaign

Anything goes in a fantasy Sherwood, which could include knights in magical armor, elven emissaries from Faerie, and perhaps a return of Arthur's Lady in the Lake (maybe even Excalibur and the return of the Once and Future King). Perhaps an ancient dragon slumbers beneath the mound at Stonehenge. What if some of those great monoliths are actually the creature's scales?

received in battle in 1199. After Richard's demise, England was left to the tender mercies of John, now with the royal crown firmly planted on his head.

Social Classes and Taxation

The England Robin Hood knew was deeply entrenched in the feudal system imposed by the Normans a little over a century earlier. The lot of peasants at this time was not a good one: They owed their very existence to the lords who owned the land on which they lived and worked. Particularly during the regency of Prince John, the taxes collected from peasants for even this mediocre standard of living was often more than they could afford.

Then, as now, England was divided into several administrative regions: the Shires, each falling under the responsibility of a shire-reeve (or sheriff). Sheriffs were appointed by the king, and they had the task of collecting taxes from the various estates under their administration. Shires were themselves subdivided into individual landholdings, which were held by various barons, knights, the Church, and other members of the nobility. Taxation levels were set by the king for each Shire, and the sheriffs, in turn, set such requirements for the individual landholders in their region. As a result of this multitiered approach, the lowest level of society (the peasants) was pressured to gain individual wealth, as each sheriff and landholder had to set higher taxation levels than his own requirement. In the traditions of Robin Hood, the nobility of England was possessed by greed and lust for power: The poor peasant really had the dirty end of the stick grasped firmly in both hands.

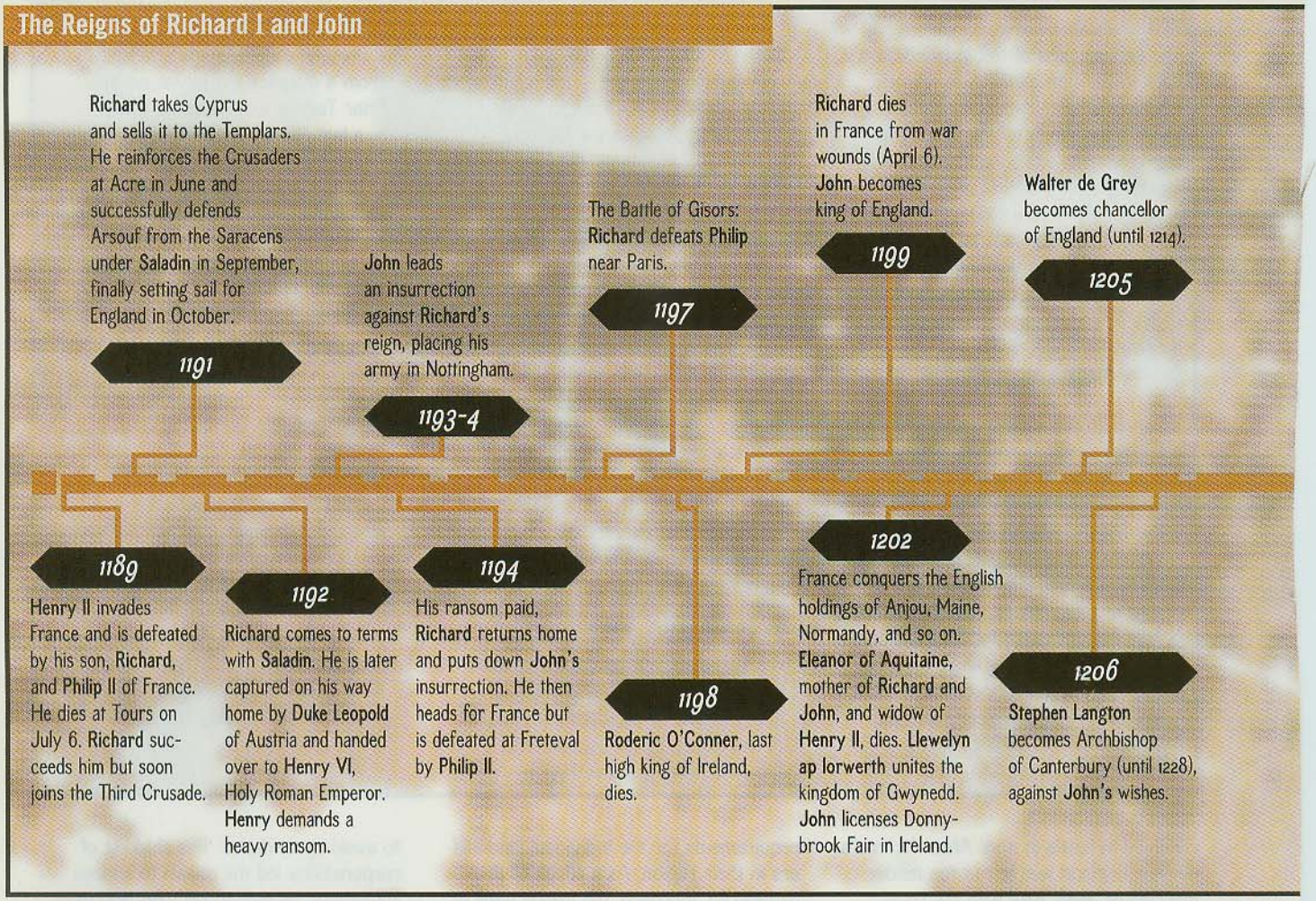
HEFT THY BOW, FAIR READER, FOR THERE IS FORTUNE TO BE MADE 'NEATH THE MIGHTY BOUGHS OF SHERWOOD

Knights, who represented the lowest rank of the nobility, were military men who received land (a "knight's fee") in return for military and other service to their lords. They were often responsible for the administration of the king's forests (such as Sherwood), as well as the control of venison and pasture rights within them. Since many of the duties assigned to knights were time-consuming and did not keep with certain knights' own views on the way their lives should be lived, many of them paid "shield money" or "scutage" to avoid these duties. This shirking of responsibility led the crown to impose knighthood on individuals who held land equivalent to a knight's fee and required the sheriffs to ensure that such individuals acquired a horse and arms or else suffer a fine. Such an individual can be seen in the Robin Hood legend in the form of Sir Richard of the Lee, who finds himself in financial difficulty after being forced into taking knighthood.

Between the peasants and the nobles were the middle, or merchant, classes. Although these individuals suffered the same onerous taxation as did the general peasantry, they could circumvent their difficulties by charging higher prices for their wares—yet another factor contributing to the plight of the peasant.

When considering this backdrop, it is not surprising that many individuals were forced to become outlaws simply to survive. The hunting of deer was expressly forbidden under royal law, but when one could not afford food, it was a choice of

The Reigns of Richard I and John


Richard takes Cyprus and sells it to the Templars. He reinforces the Crusaders at Acre in June and successfully defends Arsouf from the Saracens under Saladin in September, finally setting sail for England in October.
1191
John leads an insurrection against Richard's reign, placing his army in Nottingham.
1193-4
The Battle of Gisors: Richard defeats Philip near Paris.
1197
Richard dies in France from war wounds (April 6). John becomes king of England.
1199
Walter de Grey becomes chancellor of England (until 1214).
1205
1189
Henry II invades France and is defeated by his son, Richard, and Philip II of France. He dies at Tours on July 6. Richard succeeds him but soon joins the Third Crusade.
1192
Richard comes to terms with Saladin. He is later captured on his way home by Duke Leopold of Austria and handed over to Henry VI, Holy Roman Emperor. Henry demands a heavy ransom.
1194
His ransom paid, Richard returns home and puts down John's insurrection. He then heads for France but is defeated at Freteval by Philip II.
1198
Roderic O'Conner, last high king of Ireland, dies.
1202
France conquers the English holdings of Anjou, Maine, Normandy, and so on. Eleanor of Aquitaine, mother of Richard and John, and widow of Henry II, dies. Llewelyn ap Iorwerth unites the kingdom of Gwynedd. John licenses Donnybrook Fair in Ireland.
1206
Stephen Langton becomes Archbishop of Canterbury (until 1228), against John's wishes.

risking death at the hands of the Foresters or death from starvation. Such outlaws were well respected by their peers, to the extent that one could almost rely on his village to defend and shelter him in need. Of course, the sheriffs were not above punishing an entire village if the actual culprit could not be brought to justice.

Forest Laws

Many of the forests of England, including the mighty Sherwood, were owned by the king as personal hunting grounds. The task of protecting the forests, and the royal game within them, fell to royal appointees known as the Chief Justices of the Forest, or Chief Foresters. These figures were responsible for all the royal forests, and they were represented in each individual forest by Wardens (or Verderers) and Foresters. Even forests that were not owned by the king as hunting grounds were often protected by royal laws.

The two main Forest Laws were those of Vert and Venison. The law of Vert prevented the taking of live wood from the forest: the cutting down of saplings and full-grown trees, as well as the removal of branches from such. Making hedges within the forest was likewise banned. The law of Venison protected the royal game animals: red, fallow, and roe deer, and wild boar. To enforce the law of Venison further, it was also forbidden to keep greyhounds or to carry a bow and arrows within the bounds of the forest.

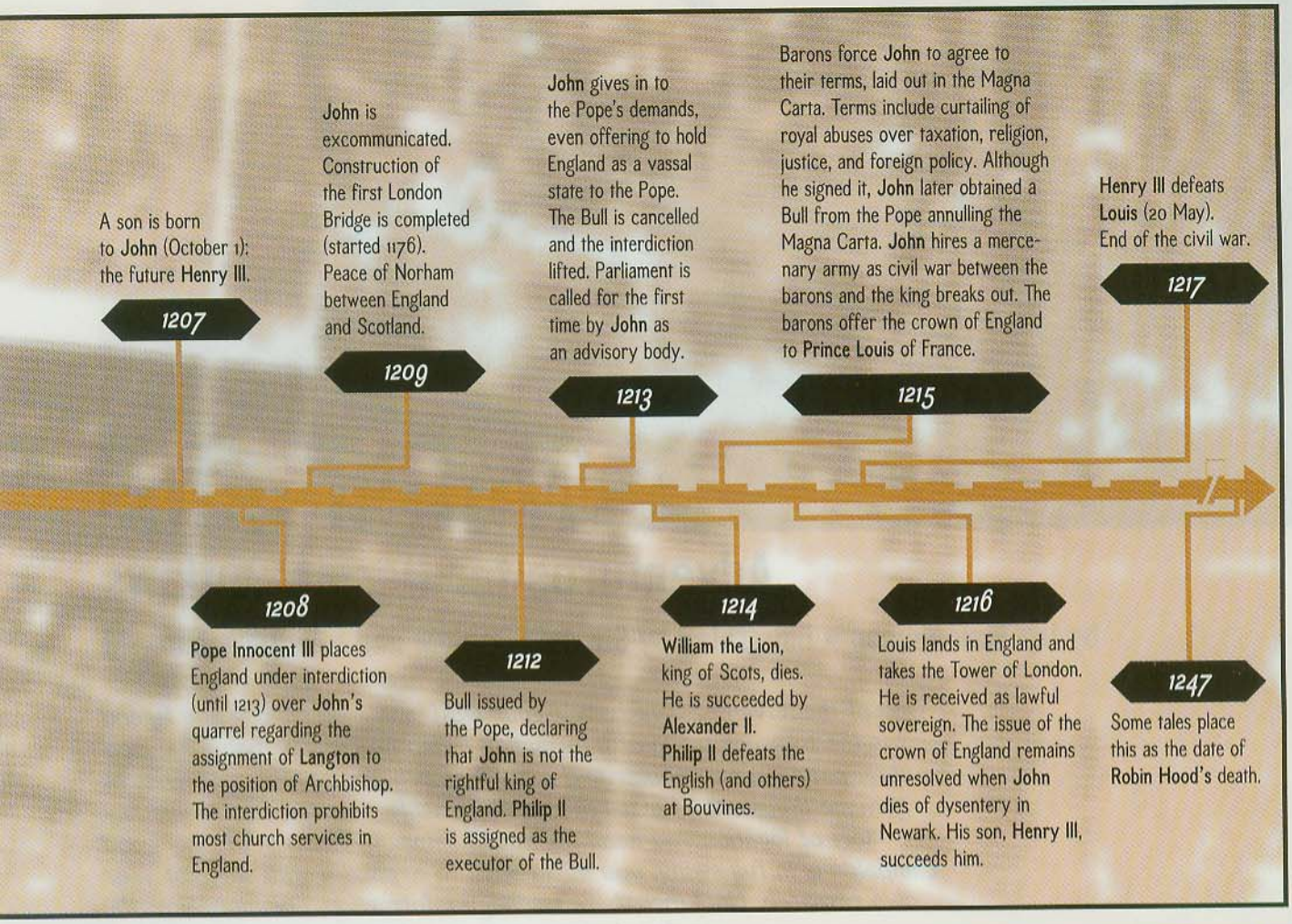
Crimes against the law of Vert usually carried fines, but those against Venison were seen as much more serious. The penalty for taking game from a royal forest could take the form of mutilation (possibly the loss of a hand), banishment, or even death. If the Foresters discovered a slain deer in their jurisdiction, an inquest was immediately held.

Justice against the Forest Laws was administered by the Forest Courts, which convened every six weeks. The power of these courts and the penalties they could impose was great. Because of this weighty authority, individual Wardens and Foresters could be very influential men, sometimes using this position to extort the peasants in their area.

Outlaws

Considering the harsh laws during the reigns of Richard and John, it is not hard to see why some decided that life outside the law was preferable to that within it, despite the obvious risks. The England of Robin Hood's era was rife with such individuals and bands, be they peasants seeking a better standard of living or Saxon nobles forced from their lands by ambitious Normans. Sherwood itself was a haven for outlaws. Although protected by the Wardens and Foresters, it was far too large to patrol effectively, and its natural resources and close proximity to the major north-south communication routes made it an ideal home.

Although Robin might or might not have been real, several famous outlaws did exist, and their escapades might have contributed to the Hood legend. Hereward the Wake was one, although his region of operations was farther south


A son is born to John (October 1): the future Henry III.
1207
John is excommunicated. Construction of the first London Bridge is completed (started 1176). Peace of Norham between England and Scotland.
1209
John gives in to the Pope's demands, even offering to hold England as a vassal state to the Pope. The Bull is cancelled and the interdiction lifted. Parliament is called for the first time by John as an advisory body.
1213
Barons force John to agree to their terms, laid out in the Magna Carta. Terms include curtailing of royal abuses over taxation, religion, justice, and foreign policy. Although he signed it, John later obtained a Bull from the Pope annulling the Magna Carta. John hires a mercenary army as civil war between the barons and the king breaks out. The barons offer the crown of England to Prince Louis of France.
1215
Henry III defeats Louis (20 May). End of the civil war.
1217
1208
Pope Innocent III places England under interdiction (until 1213) over John's quarrel regarding the assignment of Langton to the position of Archbishop. The interdiction prohibits most church services in England.
1212
Bull issued by the Pope, declaring that John is not the rightful king of England. Philip II is assigned as the executor of the Bull.
1214
William the Lion, king of Scots, dies. He is succeeded by Alexander II. Philip II defeats the English (and others) at Bouvines.
1216
Louis lands in England and takes the Tower of London. He is received as lawful sovereign. The issue of the crown of England remains unresolved when John dies of dysentery in Newark. His son, Henry III, succeeds him.
1247
Some tales place this as the date of Robin Hood's death.

than Robin's, and he lived a little earlier (circa 1070). Two more famous outlaws active during Robin's time were Fulk Fitzwarin, a baron who became outlawed early during John's reign as king (and who is actually given the mantle of Robin Hood in certain versions of the legend) and Eustace the Monk, a Frenchman whose outlaw activities were largely directed against his feudal overlord, the Count of Boulogne.

Robin is not alone in his "legendary outlaw" status. The tale of Gamelyn echoes many of Robin's tales, as does that of Adam Bell and the Three Outlaws of Carlisle. Although neither of these individuals appear in historical documents, they nonetheless prove the status the common folk of feudal England bestowed on those who dared to stand against the oppressive living conditions.

Whether drawn from these historical examples, the Robin Hood legends, or the players' imaginations, D&D heroes can find no better home than Sherwood Forest for adventure and intrigue—and perhaps a little magic, as well. D

Starting a Sherwood Campaign

To start your own adventures in the England of Robin Hood, first read the articles in this issue for a good overview of the campaign. Then launch your campaign with "Dark Times in Sherwood" (in *Dungeon* #82) or an adventure of your own creation. Since "Dark Times" is an adventure for mid-level characters, you should plan to run several of your own adventures if you want the PCs to start at 1st level. **If you've never run a D&D campaign before, there are three great resources for you to tap:**

- The *Dungeon Master's Guide* (on sale in September) is your best official source for guidance on running a D&D game. It not only includes the rules you need to be your group's Dungeon Master but also shows you how to create your own new rules and expand a campaign world.
- The "Dungeoncraft" column in each issue of *Dragon* offers both beginning and advanced DMs advice and inspiration on creating their own worlds—or expanding settings like the Forgotten Realms, Greyhawk, or Sherwood campaigns.
- For specific tips on using D&D adventures from *Dungeon* in a Sherwood campaign, see the sidebars in "Adventures in Sherwood." For the DM whose time is at a premium, there's no better resource than *Dungeon* Magazine.
- To start your Sherwood characters at first level, start with "Evil Unearthed" and "Playing With Fire" in *Dungeon* #82, and *The Sunless Citadel* module (in September) before running "Dark Times in Sherwood," also in *Dungeon* #82.

Wolfsheads

Adventures for Heroic Outlaws

by Ian Malcolmson • illustrated by Stephen Daniele and John Hermanowski

One of the advantages of basing your D&D game on history and legend is the treasure trove of information found no farther than your local library—or your computer and a good search engine. From sketches of genuine dungeons to maps of real battlefields, you can find almost any sort of location you need for your campaign. When your Sherwood campaign is in full swing, you might want to expand it with some of your own research. Until then, here's enough information, combined with the enclosed poster map, to set your campaign in motion.

When starting a Sherwood campaign, you have a few choices to make. Who are the player characters? What is the conflict that drives the campaign? What new rules do you need to make the game seem just like the movies, novels, and legends? Here are some tips to consider while making those choices.

The Heroes

A campaign based around the legends of Robin Hood can take many different forms. Although much of the source material herein assumes that your Sherwood campaign centers on the player characters as heroic outlaws, or Wolfsheads, that's not your only choice.

Your PCs could also be operating as a band of bounty hunters in the employ of a character like Abbot Hugo. This choice doesn't mean the PCs must be evil; there were plenty of outlaws in England who were not so honorable as Robin and his legendary band.

Another possibility is the one-on-one campaign. In this form, a single player takes on the role of a lone outlaw doing his best to survive while retaining his virtue. Should additional players join the game later, the introduction of their characters into the campaign becomes a simple task: They are outlaws themselves, joining with the original character for mutual protection. This method of "accumulating" an outlaw band mimics the same gathering of rebel Saxons in the Robin Hood legends.

The Setting

The "Robin Hood country" of historical England is not the only place you can set a Sherwood campaign. Nearly any region of England could be used as the setting for an "outlaw vs. Norman" campaign. You can even use the elements of a Sherwood campaign in a fantasy D&D campaign, either your own or one of the published classics. If you use the World of Greyhawk, the Gnarley, Vesve, and Adri Forests make excellent substitutes for Sherwood. Indeed, the outlaws working against the Great Kingdom described in Gary Gygax's *Saga of Old City* echo Robin's band. The forests of Cormanthor in the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting offer their own possibilities and have a Robin Hood figure in the form of Randal Morn of Daggerdale.

Virtuous Rogues

Although the normal understanding of outlaws and bandits brings to mind individuals of low morals engaging in dastardly deeds to line their own pockets, PCs within a pure Sherwood campaign should not sink to such depths. Instead, they should engage in "moral banditry."

Heroic bandits seek to disrupt the oppressive rule of the Norman nobility. Even if the heroes don't embrace the traditional doctrine of "rob the rich to feed the poor," they should have some greater purpose than accumulating

wealth for themselves. At best, they should become the protectors of the common folk. As Robin once put it: "Now look you, my merry men, that you do no harm to yeoman, or to them that till with the plough, or to the knight or squire who is kind to the poor. But these bishops and abbots who rob the poor, and the high sheriffs who bind and beat them, cropping their ear and cruelly ill-treating them. Yet, by the Virgin, you shall never do harm to any woman in the land." (E. Charles Vivian, *The Adventures of Robin Hood*).

Matters of Faith

The Christian religious organization of Robin's time was a powerful institution. The holders of the upper ranks of the Church could be counted as members of the nobility, holding land in the name of their faith and often treating the peasants living therein with the same heavy hand used by regular nobles. Worse, these individuals (the abbots, bishops, and archbishops) were only nominally under the rule of the king, since they owed more allegiance to the Pope than the secular rulers of their realm. In fact, the Pope held great political influence over the Christian kingdoms of the Medieval world, as King John found out to his cost during the Interdiction of 1208-1213 and his summary excommunication.

The lower end of the clergy (those religious folk who did not live monastic or similar lives) was less empowered. Although these individuals (chantry priests, chaplains, and so on) were respected, they held neither wealth nor political influence and, in their locally oriented roles, were perhaps more sensitive to the plight of the commoner.

Finally, there were a number of monastic religious institutions, including monasteries and priories. These institutions, although effectively under the jurisdiction of the Church, operated more independently than their larger cousins, being more interested in spiritual rather than material life.

Character Races

Although nonhuman races have their place in a Robin Hood-style, fantasy world such as the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting, such a campaign set in England should avoid these beings to retain the verisimilitude of the Robin Hood setting.

Contributing to the Delinquency of the Peasantry

Throughout the career of a noble outlaw band, there might be times when it becomes necessary for them to call on aid from the people they have sworn to protect—the peasants. Such aid will not always be forthcoming, depending on how frightened the peasants are of repercussions.

Persuading the peasants to aid an outlaw band requires a successful Diplomacy or Intimidate skill check. Note that failed Intimidate checks raise the DC for all following checks by two and decrease the peasants' attitude by one step (helpful to friendly, or friendly to indifferent, and so on). Chapter 5 of the *DMG* has more information on influencing NPC attitudes.

Lying to Norman soldiers ("They went north.")	13
Healing a wounded outlaw	15
Harboring outlaws for a night	18
Smuggling or hiding stolen goods	20
Helping with a jailbreak	25
Participating in an assault on Nottingham Castle	30

On the other hand, heroic outlaws can gain the favor of the peasantry through their own acts, gaining a bonus to their checks:

Giving luxury stolen goods (jewelry, tapestries)	+1
Granting useful stolen goods (food, tax money)	+2
Avenging a destroyed village	+3
Liberating an arrested peasant	+4
Saving a condemned peasant	+6

Character Classes

The *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* introduces several new NPC classes that are applicable to a Sherwood campaign, namely the aristocrat, commoner, expert, and warrior. However, heroes and major villains should use the character classes presented in the *Player's Handbook*.

Barbarians: By definition, the barbarian class does not exist in Medieval England. However, the class can be used in campaigns that ignore historical sensibilities. For example, barbarian characters might be Celtic outlaws from the north.

Bards: Bards, in the form of minstrels and wandering entertainers, are definitely a viable class for Sherwood. Alan-a-Dale stands as one of the most famous minstrels in English legend and, were it not for the real-life followers of this class, we would have no Robin Hood stories today at all. Like all spellcasters, bards should be limited to spells with subtle effects.

Clerics: Clerics are exemplified by the followers of such religious, militaristic orders as the Knights Templar. These groups certainly existed during Robin's time but were generally active elsewhere in Europe. However, the class still serves to describe members of the Church's nobility, such as Abbot Hugo, and other religious figures, such as Friar Tuck. They should be prohibited from wearing armor, as such was not fitting for a man of the cloth. Finally, a cleric's spell selection should be limited to subtle effects.

Druids: The time for druids has long passed, but the appearance of such mythical figures as Herne in some of the tales certainly doesn't prohibit this class from a Sherwood campaign. If they do exist, then druids should be even more rare than wizards.

Fighters: Fighters should be the most common class in a Sherwood campaign. Fighter characters could be former soldiers in training, foresters, or the martially trained Norman noblemen.

Monks: The monk class should be exceedingly rare in a Sherwood campaign. A wandering "priest" or "assassin" from the Far East could make an interesting and exotic addition to a band of outlaws, but they should be the exception rather than the rule.

Paladins: Although a few knights (especially some of the more honorable members of the Crusaders) might be paladins, the term "paladin" describes neither the forest-bound outlaws nor even the most well-meaning knights of Robin's England. The most likely paladin candidate from the tales of Robin Hood,

New Feats

Ranged Disarm
Choose one type of bow with which you are already proficient.
Prerequisites: Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Dex 13+, base attack bonus +5 or higher.
Benefit: You can perform the disarm action with this weapon.
Special: You can gain this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack. Each time you take the feat, it applies to a new weapon.

Deflect Ranged Attack
Choose one type of bow with which you are already proficient.
Prerequisites: Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Ranged Disarm, Dex 13+, base attack bonus +5 or higher.
Benefit: You can attempt to deflect ranged weapons that are already in flight. To do so, ready an action against an opponent with a missile weapon. When that opponent fires, you attack AC 23 (for thrown daggers), AC 25 (for arrows), or AC 28 (for crossbow bolts). A successful roll deflects the opponent's weapon and deals normal damage to it. This attack takes the place of your normal attack.
Special: See Ranged Disarm above.

Ranged Pin
Prerequisites: Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Dex 13+, base attack bonus +5 or higher.
Benefit: You can perform a ranged grapple attack against an opponent by pinning a bit of clothing to a nearby surface. The target must be within 5 feet of a wall, tree, or other surface in which an arrow or bolt can be stuck. To break free, the victim must take a partial action to perform a Strength check (DC 15) or make a successful Escape Artist check (DC 15).

Ranged Sunder
Prerequisites: Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Ranged Pin, Dex 13+, base attack bonus +5 or higher.
Benefit: When attacking objects, you deal normal damage (instead of half damage) with ranged weapons. See item hardness and toughness ratings on page 136 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Trick Shots

It's only a matter of time before the heroes in a Wolfsheads campaign will try to cut a noose, pin a message, win a contest, or—of course—split an opponent's arrow with their own. In addition to the new feats that allow your heroes to become master archers, here are some guidelines on the trickier shots they might attempt.

A nearby "warning" shot	15
Shooting a parchment out of someone's hands	20
Hitting the bullseye	23
Splitting an arrow in a target	28

King Richard, might have been honorable, but his love of battle and his willingness to leave the kingdom in the hands of the weak and jealous John seem at least unwise and perhaps unworthy of a paladin.

Rangers: Many versions of Robin himself stand as excellent examples of this class. A ranger's wilderness talents are especially helpful to any outlaw band.

Sorcerers: Sorcerers fit a legendary or fantasy version of the Sherwood campaign. In either case, they should be rare, and they should expect to be feared and reviled by the common folk and nobility alike, though the latter might hope to manipulate them into service.

Rogues: Second only to fighters in frequency, rogues can be found all over England, from the petty cutpurses haunting the markets of Nottingham to the possibly more heroic members of the class operating as outlaws in Sherwood itself.

Wizards: Even in a campaign of mystical theme, wizards should be virtually unknown, especially given the attitude of the powerful Church toward such individuals. It is suggested that the wizard class remain out of players' hands in a Sherwood campaign. If a DM wishes to allow wizard PCs, they should remain few and far between (no more than one in any given adventuring party), and spell selection should be limited to subtler magics than *fireballs* and *lightning bolts*.

Sherwood Adventures

The following adventure ideas can form the basis for a Wolfsheads campaign. Although presented as part of a Sherwood Forest campaign, a little adaptation can make them perfect for adventures in any D&D setting.

• **Fair Maiden in Peril.** A wicked nobleman has taken to a maiden attached to one of the player characters (sister, cousin, or maybe even a sweetheart) and intends to marry her, regardless of her feelings on the matter. Abbot Hugo has authorized the marriage and, knowing her connection to a known outlaw, has her locked up under his "protection." He intends to send a heavy guard, led by Sir Guy, to escort her to the church for the marriage ceremony.

The outlaws must rescue the maiden. This might take the form of infiltrating the stronghold where Hugo has her or ambushing Guy and his escort en route to the church. Whatever the plan, it is imperative that the PCs accomplish the rescue before the wedding.

• **Relics of the Ancients.** Suitable for campaigns with a mystical atmosphere, this hook involves the recovery of some artifact, which might be a weapon that the spiritual mentor of the outlaws intends the band to use in their future adventures. The artifact might be hidden in one of the many ancient sites that dot the Pennines (a range of hills in north-central England) or might have already been recovered by the Sheriff, Abbot Hugo, Isambart de Belame, or some other figure. The outlaws must explore the ancient site in search of the artifact or recover it from the treasure hold of its unlawful keeper.

• **Dinner with the Sheriff.** One of the most important things an outlaw band needs is information. To be successful, they need to be able to predict when and where treasure caravans are to appear, keep tabs on unfortunates that might need rescuing from the dungeons of the Normans, and stay one step ahead of those that are trying to hunt them down. One way this can be achieved is for the group to pose as nobles. Using cunning and disguise, they might be able to persuade even the Sheriff of Nottingham that they are genuine and get themselves invited to one of his banquets in Nottingham Castle! This ploy could also be part of a rescue plan or some other operation.

• **Prince John and King Richard.** News reaches the outlaws that Richard has been taken prisoner in Europe and that John refuses to pay the ransom to keep the rightful king out of the way while he plots to usurp the throne. The PCs could launch a thieving spree directed at Prince John to raise the funds necessary to free Richard, then travel to Europe to pay it. If the funds cannot be raised, then perhaps a daring raid on the stronghold of Henry VI might be executed. The PCs might not be the ones to go to Henry with the ransom, remaining in England to thwart John's plans while a friend loyal to Richard takes the money raised by the outlaws to Henry.

• **Not so Merry Men.** Sherwood Forest is deemed suitable for operations by a band of ruthless cutthroats. The new extortionists threaten the livelihood and good (peasant) standing of the Merry Men by behaving unscrupulously. The PCs must quickly "persuade" the new gang to move on. To complicate matters, the PCs might feel obliged to put right the cutthroats wrongs, if for no other reason then to restore their own tarnished image.

• **From Bard to Worse.** A popular bard sympathetic to the outlaws has been framed and scheduled to be executed. The bard's crime was to extoll the virtues of the robber gang to the wrong people. The PCs must break the bard out of jail or prevent the execution. Further difficulties (the bard is blind; the prison is subterranean or on a small island) can make the mission unique.

Ranged Weapons in Melee

Ranged weapons such as bows and crossbows are not intended for use as melee weapons; however, in dire circumstances an archer can use his ranged weapon to inflict melee damage. Proficiency with the weapon does not apply when using it as a melee weapon, so a -4 attack penalty applies. Furthermore, ranged weapons used in melee cannot deal critical hits. If the amount of melee damage inflicted by the weapon exceeds the weapon's hardness rating (see below), the weapon suffers an equal amount of damage.

DMs can allow players to take an Exotic Weapon proficiency to use one type of ranged weapon in melee to eliminate the nonproficiency penalty, but the danger of breaking the weapon remains.

Item	Type	Melee Damage	Critical	Hardness Rating	Hit Points
Crossbow, Light	B	1d4	×2	5	3
Crossbow, Heavy	B	1d6	×2	5	5
Shortbow	B	1d2	×2	5	2
Shortbow, Composite	B	1d2	×2	5	3
Longbow	B	1d3	×2	5	4
Longbow, Composite	B	1d3	×2	5	5

• **Child's Play.** After a series of defiant and outrageous robberies and other antics, the band's notoriety is at an all-time high. Unfortunately, some young kids are now mimicking the band's actions but with less success. Their escapades threaten to cause a unfavorable shift among the peasant class, not to mention the possible arrest and punishment of the young impersonators for crimes they might not have committed.

• **Winter is Coming.** During an extremely harsh winter, all roads through the forest are closed, and wild game has moved to lower lands. The band is getting hungry and a little desperate, as are the peasants. Food stockpiles are wasting away in Nottingham with no sign that the Sheriff will be distributing it. The PCs must formulate and execute a plan to distribute the stockpiles to the people who need them before it's too late.

• **Raid on Sherwood.** The Sheriff sends his entire army into the forest to root out the outlaws. The outlaws must react quickly to avoid capture. With so many soldiers in the field, however, Nottingham castle becomes a tempting target ... or is the Sheriff's plan to lure the outlaws into a trap?

• **The Big Haul.** Due to the lack of taxes being collected (and kept) because of all of the group's raids, the Sheriff must bring in money from England to pay his guards. The group finds out about the gold shipment and have a chance to make some money for the local villagers and sow further discontent in the ranks of the guards by stealing their pay. Of course, there will be a heavy contingent of guards escorting the coffers.

• **Seat of Power.** (For mystical campaigns.) Spies in Nottingham have told the outlaws that the Sheriff has an elite set of guards out looking for a powerful magic item that will aid him in his plans to eliminate the group or gain complete control over the villagers. The heroes must find the item first, unless they prefer to set an ambush for the soldiers after they find it ... although one of the villains might have learned to use the item against the outlaws by then.

• **Storm the Castle!** The activities of the nobles in the group's area of influence have reached the boiling point! To save the peasants from further deprivations, the outlaws decide that only the removal of the worst noble will achieve their goal—the Sheriff of Nottingham must die!

Of course, the morals of the group prevent them from simply assassinating the rogue. They must infiltrate Nottingham Castle, avoiding the bulk of the Sheriff's men, and challenge the man himself.

Then, of course, there's the small matter of getting out again ...

The Great Greenwood

A Mini-Gazetteer of Robin Hood Country

by Ian Malcolmson • illustrated by Larry McDougal • map by Stephen Daniele

One of the advantages of basing your D&D game on history and legend is the treasure trove of information found no farther than your local library—or your computer and a good search engine. From sketches of genuine dungeons to maps of real battlefields, you can find almost any sort of location you need for your campaign. When your Sherwood campaign is in full swing, you might want to expand it with some of your own research. Until then, here's enough information, combined with the enclosed poster map, to set your campaign in motion.

The poster map depicts the region of England in which the legends of Robin Hood take place. As well as the places referred to in the Robin Hood tales—and major cities, towns, and villages that existed during the reign of Richard I—several ancient places appear. The following gazetteer gives a rough overview of some of the more important locations around Sherwood and provides notes on how you might use them in a campaign.

Arbor Low (e8)

This stone circle is sometimes known as the "Stonehenge of the Peaks." It consists of over forty limestone blocks arranged on a raised plateau surrounded by a quarry ditch and bank, with entrances to the northwest and southeast. It is 250 feet wide at its broadest point. Some of the blocks reach 7 feet in height. It was built around 2000 B.C.

Campaign Use: Like all of the ancient and mystical places described in this gazetteer, Arbor Low could be used in a legendary campaign as a meeting place for followers of the old faiths, witches, or even Herne himself. Historical campaigns might use this place as a convenient landmark, far away from any settlement where outlaw groups gather. In a fantasy campaign, only the DM knows what magical properties the stones might release.

Bailey Hill (f5)

This hill is an ancient mound that might have been a burial place, a Saxon or Norman fortification, or simply a local meeting place. Legend has it that treasure lies buried beneath it, and a tunnel complex exists connecting it with a second, nearby mound named Castle Hill.

Campaign Use: Bailey Hill and Castle Hill might be developed into traditional dungeon-type settings, and perhaps the treasure spoken of lies protected by monstrous or magical guardians. If Bailey Hill is a fortification in your campaign, it might house a minor local lord. If neither treasure nor fort exist, the tunnels could form an excellent hiding place for outlaws.

Bakewell (e7)

This Derbyshire hamlet has existed since Roman times.

Campaign Use: Although seemingly an insignificant hamlet, Bakewell has some interesting possibilities. Its position near the Grey Ladies and Leesmoor Wood make it close to what could be a region of outlaw activity. It also lies within twenty miles of the edge of Sherwood Forest and is mentioned in some of the Robin Hood tales.

Barnesdale Forest (g4–h4)

This region of scattered woodlands lies north and west of Doncaster. In the earlier legends of Robin Hood, it was this area—not Sherwood—that housed Robin and his men. Its position across the old Roman Watling Street, still in use as a major road during the time of Richard I, made it ideal for outlaws to stage ambushes against merchants and

caravans as they pass from north to south, or vice-versa.

Campaign Use: As noted, Barnesdale is ideal for bandits and outlaws, even if it doesn't provide the hiding places of the more celebrated Sherwood Forest. A campaign centered on Robin and his men might use Barnesdale as the outlaws' home during their early escapades before moving to Sherwood, perhaps as the band becomes too large to hide effectively in this area.

Bridestone's Tomb (b7)

This prehistoric chambered tomb is located near Congleton.

Campaign Use: Like all ancient sites in this gazetteer, the Bridestone's Tomb might be a place of mystical importance in campaigns using figures such as Herne. In a fantasy or legendary campaign, it is the perfect location to place undead that seek revenge against thieves who loot their graves, or that rise to punish the Frankish conquerors when the right conditions are met.

Castle Hill (e3)

The site of an Iron Age hill fort and the center of several legends, Castle Hill is the subject of wild tales. Some say that a golden cradle is buried in the hill. Others whisper that the devil leapt from the top of Scar Top at Netherton to the hill and yet others suggest that underground passages link it to the village of Farnley Tyas (to the southeast), Almondbury (to the north), and across the River Colne.

Campaign Use: Castle Hill is another ancient site that can be incorporated into a legendary campaign, or maybe the tunnels simply provide a hiding place and base of operations for an outlaw group. In a fantasy campaign, the rumor about the devil could be based on the story of a wizard who conjured a fiend that still stalks the land.

Cockcrowing Stone (f5)

A prehistoric monument that might have been used for making astronomical observations, the Cockcrowing Stone is also known as Head Stone and Stump John. The Cockcrowing Stone's name comes from the belief that it turns around on certain mornings when the cock crows.

Campaign Use: This ancient site can be used either as a convenient meeting place or something more enchanting, depending on the campaign's theme. In a legendary or fantasy campaign, perhaps the stone was once a living being petrified by a cockatrice.

Doncaster (h4)

This important town is the site of an old Roman fort (Danum).

Campaign Use: The nearest major town to Barnesdale serves as home to Sir Roger of Doncaster, who assisted the Prioress of Kirklees in Robin's murder. Depending on where your campaign is centered, Doncaster might be to Barnesdale as Nottingham is to Sherwood.

Edwinstowe (h7)

This village lies within Sherwood Forest, just south of Major Oak. In some versions of the Robin Hood legends, it is in Edwinstowe that Robin and Marian were wed by Friar Tuck.

Campaign Use: Edwinstowe can be used as a typical English village, perhaps one sympathetic to an outlaw group's cause. If a campaign is set after Robin's time, this place might hold special meaning to any attempting to follow in his footsteps.

Fountaindale (h7)

According to legend, this region of Sherwood Forest was the home of Friar Tuck and where Robin first met the fat, friendly cleric.

Campaign Use: If your players enjoy encounters that remind them of the legends they know, perhaps they can find an itinerant cleric in this area—and maybe they must fight him before gaining his respect and trust.

Grey Ladies (e7)

The Grey Ladies form one of several stone circles and other ancient monuments standing near a pair of tors known as Robin Hood's Stride. The tors of the stride are 18 feet tall and stand 22 yards apart. The tors themselves are a pair of druidic monuments.

The Robin Hood of this area is not the celebrated subject of the familiar legends but a giant Green Man who urinated into the meadow while standing with one foot on each tor. The seven maidens who witnessed this act were turned to stone and became known as the Grey Ladies.

Campaign Use: The sheer number of different monuments (circles, stones, and barrows, not to mention the tors of the Stride themselves) obviously make this place important to the ancient religions of England. The mythical Green Man might be a hill giant druid in a fantasy Sherwood.

Hathersage (e5)

This village in the Pennines, west of Sheffield and south of Loxley, is said to be Little John's birthplace. The village still has, in its churchyard, a 14-foot-long grave marked with a gravestone engraved with the letters "J.L." (presumably for John Little). The cottage in which John was said to have died lies at the east end of the village, and the church supposedly held his 6-foot, 7-inch longbow, arrows, a piece of chain armor, and his hat.

Campaign Use: As with Edwinstowe, this village might be important to any group attempting to carry on Robin's mission. While it is unlikely that Little John's spirit would rise in undead form, perhaps his tomb contains magical items in a legendary campaign. In a fantasy campaign, a *speak with dead* spell might reveal secrets that died with Robin's most trusted companion.

Huntingdon

This town lies north of York and does not appear on the map, but it is worthy of note as the home of Robert, Earl of Huntingdon, who is Robin Hood in some of the legends.

Kirklees Priory (e2)

In some of the Robin Hood tales, this Cistercian nunnery was a haven for Maid Marian. It is far more popularly known as the site on which the Abbess and Sir Roger of Doncaster conspired to bleed Robin to death. It is here that Robin supposedly died, letting an arrow fly from one of the windows with his dying breath and instructing Little John to bury him wherever it landed. Indeed, some 650 yards from the gateway, a gravestone lay that, before erosion made it unreadable, read: "Here lie Robard Hude, William Goldsburgh, Thomas..." The rest was either illegible or not recorded.

Campaign Use: Obviously, along with other sites famous for their involvement in the Robin stories, Kirklees Priory might be a site that those influenced by Robin could hold dear. Given the nature of the Prioress, according to the stories, the plots hatched here could be a thorn in the side of an outlaw party. In a legendary or fantasy campaign, the place might still bear a curse born of the Abbess's evil, or perhaps the last arrow of Robin Hood could be discovered and its magical powers turned to good use once more.

Loxley (e5)

This small Saxon farming village is the legendary birthplace of Robin Hood in some versions of the legend.

Campaign Use: Loxley (spelled "Locksley" in some of the American versions of Robin Hood) might or might not still exist, depending on the campaign history individual DMs wish to spin. Although Robin of Loxley appears as Robin Hood in most of the modern versions of the story, the fate of Loxley varies from being simply abandoned by Robin after he is forced into becoming an outlaw to being completely burned to the ground.

Major Oak (h7)

North of Edwinstowe, this huge oak is supposed to be one of the places where Robin held court with his men and where he and Marian were betrothed.

Campaign Use: Although at the time of Richard I the tree would have been only a sapling, there is no reason why history should not be usurped for the romantic legend of the site. In a fantasy campaign, the oak could be a great treant who encourages heroes to great deeds.

Manchester (b4)

Manchester is a textile town. To the north of Manchester stands Boggart Hole Clough, a deep wooded valley (now surrounded by the city of Greater Manchester). Boggart Hole is said to be haunted by a boggart (which, in English mythology, is more a mischievous form of brownie than an immature will-o'-wisp).

Campaign Use: Boggart Hole might be haunted by some twisted relation of the brownie, a boggart, one or more will o' wisps, or something more sinister. If it isn't actually haunted, the rumors to the contrary could provide an additional measure of safety for outlaws using the valley as a home.

Nine Ladies (f7)

A stone circle with an accompanying single standing stone (the King Stone), the Nine Ladies are part of a series of smaller sites and burial cairns scattered across Stanton Moor that probably date back to the early Bronze Age. Like many such stone circles, the Nine Ladies has a tale of petrification surrounding it. In it, the circle was a group that was turned to stone for dancing on the Sabbath.

Campaign Use: This is another possible site for meetings with Herne, but characters in a fantasy campaign might discover the true nature of the Ladies if they cast a *stone to flesh* spell on them. The location of the Nine Ladies and Stanton Moor with respect to Sherwood makes it even more convenient.

Nottingham (h9)

An important county town. The castle here was founded by William I "The Conqueror" in 1068 and was later expanded by Henry II from 1160 to 1180. During his insurrection of 1193-94,

Prince John seized the castle, holding it with his supporters until Richard I forced them to surrender. Even after he became king in 1199, John spent a lot of time in Nottingham and carried out further work on the castle.

Castle Rock, the outcrop on which the castle was built, is riddled with tunnels and caves, some exceeding 100 yards in length. One such tunnel, known as Mortimer's Hole, is 107 yards long and allowed Edward III to enter the castle secretly in 1330 and arrest Roger Mortimer, Earl of March. Some of these passages lead from the castle to the cellars of the Olde Trip to Jerusalem, the "oldest pub in England." Others extend under the Nottingham proper, and further tunnels exist below the town. Indeed, the name "Nottingham" comes from the Anglo-Saxon *snodenge* (caves) and *ham* (house).

Campaign Use: The home of the Sheriff of Nottingham and the largest town in proximity to Sherwood, Nottingham has an obvious place in a campaign set around the tales of Robin Hood. Additionally, the many tunnels below the town and Castle Hill offer some excellent adventure opportunities.

Robin Hood's Bay

The site of a small fishing village and one of England's prettier beaches, Robin Hood's Bay lies approximately halfway between Scarborough and Whitby, approximately thirty miles off the north edge of the map. This bay is of passing interest, since Robin Hood was supposed to have kept fishing boats here for use if a quick getaway on the sea was needed.

Campaign Use: DMs of a legendary or fantasy campaign might plague the local villagers with raids from hideous sea demons (sahuagin) to prompt a rescue by the heroes.

Robin Hood's Hill (h8)

Atop the hill stands Oxton Camp, a small Iron Age hillfort just east of Sherwood Forest. Nearby lies a round barrow some 20 feet high and 90 feet across; this site is known as Robin Hood's Pot. A ley (a source of magical energy) runs through Oxton Camp, mystically linking Oxton church, the camp, Bilsthorpe church and moat, Boughton church, Walesby churchyard, and a chapel by the River Maun.

Campaign Use: Legend has it that Robin used to stand on the hill to survey the lands to the east of his domain. The ancient origin of the site, its proximity to Sherwood, and its position on a ley also make it a good place of importance for more mystical campaigns.

Sherwood Forest (h6–h9)

Sherwood is perhaps the most famous of all the places associated with Robin Hood. Although the traditional ballads place Robin's activities in and around Barnesdale, that place has been largely forgotten in the later tales, giving over to the more impressive extents of Nottinghamshire's largest forest.

Sherwood was one of the most famous royal forests in England. The first historical mention of the site appears in 958, when it was known as Sciryuda. After the Conquest, it was cultivated as a royal hunting ground and, at the time of Robin, its size was in excess of 100,000 acres.

The forest itself contains many places famed in the tales of Robin Hood. The village of Edwinstowe lies in its central reaches, as does the Major Oak. Fountain Dale, where Robin supposedly met Friar Tuck, stretches across its south-central region, and its boundaries contain sites steeped in Robin Hood mythology.

Like any forest, Sherwood was not an area completely covered by woodlands. It encompasses several different types of terrain, from marshlands to cultivated farm areas, as well as the thick greenery of the forest proper. Robin was not the only outlaw to find haven in these latter regions of almost impenetrable woodlands.

Campaign Use: If the importance of this site needs to be described, you might be reading the wrong article!

Wakefield (f3)

An important town, Wakefield later became the county town of West Yorkshire, important for its textile, brewing, and coal-mining industries.

Campaign Use: Wakefield was the home of one Robert Hood, a criminal figure who appears on the Court Rolls of Wakefield (the records of court activities in the town) between 1308 to 1315. He was found guilty of taking firewood from the Outwood and the Old and New Parks of the town, and he was reprimanded and fined on a number of occasions. He might have been the same man as one Robin Hood, who is recorded as buying a plot of land on Bickhill—Wakefield's market place—in 1316. The name of his wife is recorded as one Matilda and, as coincidence has it, a later tradition cites Marian's real name as Matilda.

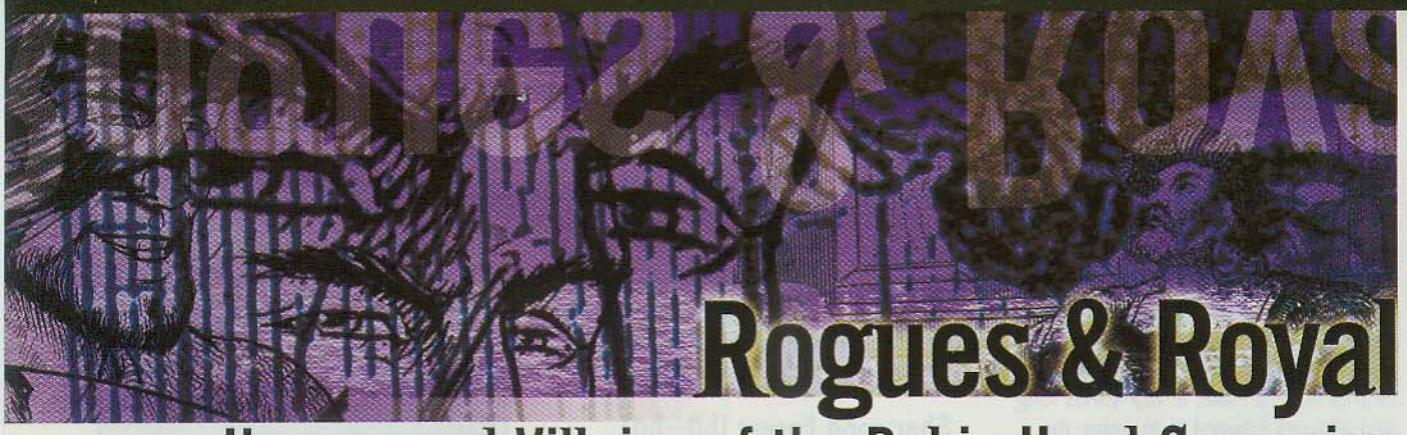
Nottingham (Small town):

Feudalism; AL LE; 1,000 gp limit; Assets: 75,000 gp; Population 1,500; Human 100%.
Authority Figure: Hugo de Rainault Abbot of St. Mary's, male human Clr10.

Important Characters:
Sheriff Robert de Rainault male human Ftr10
Baron Isambart de Belame male human Nec10
Sir Roger of Doncaster male human Ftr11
Others: Bbn1 (x6); Brd3 (x2); Clr3 (x2); Dru3 (x2); Ftr4 (x2); Mnk2 (x1); Rgr1 (x2); Rog 4 (x2); Sor2 (x1); Wiz2 (x1); Adp5 (x1); Adp3 (x6); Com5 (x1328); Exp5 (x44); Nob1 (x7); War4 (x74).

Typical Saxon Village (Hamlet):

Feudalism; AL NG; 500 gp limit; Assets: 1000 gp; Population 200; Human 100%.
Authority Figure: Mayor Aaron Mysel, male human Ari1.
Important Characters: Richard "trunk" Oldemain, male human War3 (constable); Melanye Laring, female human Com3 (general merchant), George Beauchamp, male human Exp3 (blacksmith), Lela Trennan, female human Exp2 (inn proprietor).
Others: Ftr1 (x2); Wiz1 (x1); Clr1 (x2); Dru1 (x1); War1 (x9); Rgr2 (x2); Exp1 (x7); Rog1 (x2); Brd1 (x1); Adp1 (x1); Com1 (x164).
Notes: This description represents the typical village heroic outlaws might use as shelter from the Sheriff of Nottingham or as a source of supplies. It also represents the people for whom the outlaws are fighting.



Rogues & Royal

Heroes and Villains of the Robin Hood Campaign

by Ian Malcolmson • illustrated by Ron Spencer and George Vrbanic

The Sherwood legends have both thrilling heroes and chilling villains to offer your Sherwood campaign. Here are the best-known versions of the outlaws of Sherwood, as well as their allies and enemies. In fact, you can choose from Robin of Loxley and Robin of Huntingdon depending on whether you like your Wolfshead to be a man of the people or a virtuous noble. Even if you don't launch a Sherwood campaign, any of these characters makes a great addition to your existing D&D campaign.

Typical Norman Soldier

Human, 1st-level warrior

Strength	15 (+2)	Fort. Save	+4
Dexterity	11 (0)	Ref. Save	0
Constitution	14 (+2)	Will Save	0
Intelligence	11 (0)	Alignment	LE
Wisdom	10 (0)	Speed	30
Charisma	11 (0)	Size	M
Armor Class	16	Melee Attack	+3
Hit Points	12	Ranged Attack	+1

Special: Proficient with all simple and martial weapons, all armor, and shields.
Skills: Climb +3, Jump +3, Ride +1, Spot +1, Swim +3.
Feats: Point Blank Shot, Power Attack.
Possessions: Chainmail armor, small wooden shield, longsword, dagger, light crossbow with quiver of bolts.

This represents the typical soldier used by Sir Guy, Abbot Hugo, the Sheriff of Nottingham, Isambart de Belame, and Sir Roger of Doncaster in their quest to bring Robin to justice. Higher-level sergeants and other commanders can be created using this model by simply adjusting the level, hit points, base attack bonus, and so on. Depending on your campaign, some soldiers might be good, even heroic.

Note: The skill modifiers for all characters include the ranks of the skill plus their respective ability score modifiers and bonuses provided by feats. They do not include any penalties incurred by the use of armor or shields, or bonuses accrued through skill synergy.

Typical Saxon Outlaw

Human, 1st-level rogue

Strength	11 (0)	Fort. Save	+1
Dexterity	15 (+2)	Ref. Save	+4
Constitution	13 (+1)	Will Save	0
Intelligence	12 (+1)	Alignment	CG
Wisdom	10 (0)	Speed	30
Charisma	10 (0)	Size	M
Armor Class	15	Melee Attack	+0
Hit Points	7	Ranged Attack	+2

Special: Proficient with crossbow (hand and light), dagger, dart, light mace, sap, shortbow, short sword, club, heavy crossbow, heavy mace, morningstar, quarterstaff, and light armor; sneak attack +1d6.
Skills: Balance +4, Bluff +2, Climb +3, Craft (bowmaking) +2, Disguise +2, Escape Artist +4, Hide +6, Intimidate +1, Intuit Direction +2, Jump +2, Knowledge (Sherwood) +2, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Spot +4, Swim +2, Tumble +5, Wilderness Lore +2.
Feats: Alertness, Martial Weapon Proficiency (longbow).
Possessions: Leather armor, short sword, dagger, longbow with quiver of arrows.

This archetype represents most rogues found in Robin's band. These rogues are more likely to differ in skill and feat selection than the Norman soldiery because most of them didn't initially choose banditry as a profession. Feel free to adjust them as you see fit, perhaps by adding a rank in Profession (farmer), Craft (armorer), or another skill.

Robin of Loxley

Male human, 7th-level ranger, 5th-level rogue

Strength	14 (+2)	Fort. Save	+8
Dexterity	20 (+5)	Ref. Save	+11
Constitution	15 (+2)	Will Save	+5
Intelligence	16 (+3)	Alignment	NG
Wisdom	15 (+2)	Speed	30
Charisma	17 (+3)	Size	M (5' 11")

Armor Class	17	Melee Attack	+12/+7
Hit Points	81	Ranged Attack	+15/+10

Special: Track, favored enemy (evil Norman nobles, evil bandits), sneak attack +3d6, evasion, proficient with all martial and simple weapons, light and medium armor, and shields.

Skills: Balance +10, Climb +8, Concentration +4, Craft (bowmaking) +13, Disguise +10, Escape Artist +13, Handle Animal +6, Hide +15, Innuendo +7, Intuit Direction +8, Jump +6, Knowledge (law) +6, Knowledge (Sherwood) +10, Listen +10, Move Silently +15, Profession (farmer) +4, Ride +11, Search +10, Sense Motive +8, Spot +8, Swim +6, Tumbling +13, Use Rope +7, Wilderness Lore +10.

Feats: Far Shot, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Ranged Disarm (longbow), Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow).

Possessions: Leather armor, longsword, dagger, longbow with quiver of arrows.

Robin of Loxley was a freeman landholder who owned a small farm around the village of Loxley on the Derbyshire border of Yorkshire. Saxon by birth, Robin was sympathetic to the plight of the commoner under Prince John's reign and occasionally gave sanctuary to those who took the king's deer from the nearby forest to survive.

When his attitude towards these poachers became known to Abbot Hugo, the landlord of the lands including Loxley, Robin was confronted by the Abbot's steward, Sir Guy of Gisburn, and was forced to flee with his friend and head man, Will Scarlet. Thus began his career as one of the most celebrated outlaws of English legend.

During his escapades, he earned the enmity of several members of the Norman nobility, including Abbot Hugo and his steward, Sir Roger "The Cruel" of Doncaster, Baron Isambart de Belame, and Hugo's brother Robert, the Sheriff of Nottingham. After Robin slew the Sheriff in revenge for Will Scarlett's murder, his aunt, the Prioress Elizabeth of Kirklees, and Sir Roger conspired to kill him. He finally died in Kirklees Abbey, firing a single shot through his window and instructing his outlaw friend, John Little of Hathersage, to bury him where it fell.

Although branded an outlaw, Robin remained a loyal subject of King Richard "Coeur de Lion" throughout his life, and he saw his actions as those of an honorable freeman fighting against the oppressive regime Prince John instigated during Richard's absence from England.

Robert, Earl of Huntingdon

Male human, 8th-level fighter, 2nd-level rogue

Strength	14 (+2)	Fort. Save	+8
Dexterity	17 (+3)	Ref. Save	+8
Constitution	14 (+2)	Will Save	+4
Intelligence	16 (+3)	Alignment	NG
Wisdom	15 (+2)	Speed	30
Charisma	17 (+3)	Size	M (5' 11")

Armor Class	15	Melee Attack	+11/+6
Hit Points	57	Ranged Attack	+12/+7

Special: Sneak attack +1d6, evasion, proficient with all martial and simple weapons, all armor, and shields.

Skills: Balance +5, Climb +8, Craft (bowmaking) +13, Diplomacy +5, Disguise +8, Escape Artist +8, Handle Animal +6, Hide +8, Innuendo +6, Intuit Direction +6, Jump +6, Knowledge (law) +4, Knowledge (Sherwood) +11, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Ride +5, Search +7, Sense Motive +6, Spot +6, Swim +4, Tumbling +8, Use Rope +6, Wilderness Lore +9.

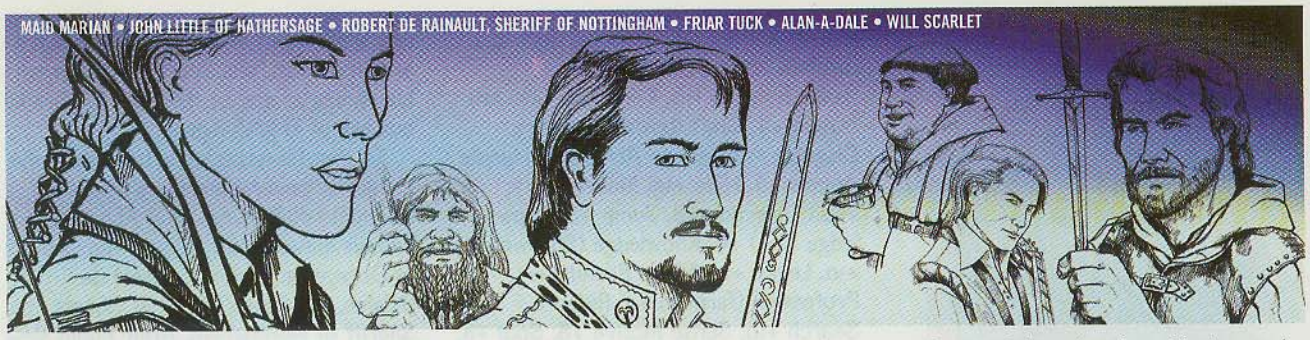
Feats: Deflect Ranged Attack (longbow), Dodge, Far Shot, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Ranged Disarm (longbow), Ranged Pin (longbow), Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow), Weapon Specialization (longbow).

Possessions: Leather armor, large wooden shield, longsword, longbow with quiver of arrows.

Another candidate for the title of Robin Hood, Robert was the son of the Earl of Huntingdon. When the old Earl lay dying, Abbot Hugo saw a chance to gain the Huntingdon lands for his own and hatched a plot to discredit Robert. Paying one of the Earl's men to murder his liege in his sick-bed, Hugo framed Robert for the deed, citing the fact that Robert stood to inherit the lands and title as motive. Of course, Norman justice took the word of one with such influence as the Abbot, and Robert was forced to flee or else be unjustly executed for the murder of his own father.

Robert, as Robin Hood, gives an interesting twist to the traditional tales. Instead of a Saxon freeman, Robin becomes a Norman once-nobleman. His fight for justice for the common people becomes as much a quest to clear his name and exact revenge on Abbot Hugo.

The British *Robin of Sherwood* TV series provides yet another interesting twist. Here, Robin of Loxley, chosen of Herne, is slain and leaves no heir to carry on his fight against oppression. Herne goes on to choose Robert as the next Robin Hood, and so both legends become one.



John Little (aka Little John) of Hathersage

Male human, 9th-level fighter, 1st-level rogue

Strength	20 (+5)	Fort. Save	+9
Dexterity	14 (+2)	Ref. Save	+7
Constitution	17 (+3)	Will Save	+2
Intelligence	11 (0)	Alignment	CG
Wisdom	9 (–1)	Speed	30
Charisma	13 (+1)	Size	M (7')

Armor Class	15	Melee Attack	+14/+9
Hit Points	82	Ranged Attack	+11/+6

Special: Sneak attack +1d6, proficient with all martial and simple weapons, all armor, and shields.
Skills: Balance +4, Climb +10, Craft (bowmaking) +3, Disguise +5, Escape Artist +6, Handle Animal +3, Hide +6, Intimidate +5, Intuit Direction +2, Jump +9, Knowledge (Sherwood) +2, Listen +2, Move Silently +6, Ride +4, Search +2, Swim +9, Use Rope +4, Wilderness Lore +3.
Feats: Ambidexterity, Cleave, Dodge, Great Cleave, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (quarterstaff), Weapon Specialization (quarterstaff).
Possessions: Studded leather armor, quarterstaff, longsword, handaxe, dagger, longbow with quiver of arrows.

Most of the traditional tales have John's birthplace as the Derbyshire village of Hathersage, and it is there that his grave (if it is indeed his) lies. Some have his origins in Mansfield, a small town on the outskirts of Sherwood. He was the servant of a petty noble until his hot temper caused him to strike down his wicked master, and he was forced to flee.

Before the famous meeting between John and Robin at a tree-bridge, and the quarterstaff bout that gave Robin a bath, John had heard of the famous outlaw and respected him for the tales he had heard regarding Robin's escapades against Abbot Hugo and Sir Guy. Upon discovering that his defeated foe was this very same Robin Hood, John offered to join the outlaw and his band. Having had first-hand experience of the man's fighting prowess, Robin agreed, and thus began one of the most famous friendships of English legend.

Maid Marian

Female human, 3rd-level fighter, 1st-level rogue

Strength	10 (0)	Fort. Save	+4
Dexterity	16 (+3)	Ref. Save	+6
Constitution	13 (+1)	Will Save	+3
Intelligence	16 (+3)	Alignment	NG
Wisdom	15 (+2)	Speed	30
Charisma	18 (+4)	Size	M (5' 10")

Armor Class	13	Melee Attack	+3
Hit Points	24	Ranged Attack	+6

Special: Sneak attack +1d6, proficient with all martial and simple weapons, all armor, and shields.
Skills: Climb +2, Craft (bowmaking) +7, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +8, Escape Artist +5, Gather Information +8, Heal +4, Hide +7, Innuendo +6, Jump +2, Knowledge (religion) +5, Knowledge (Sherwood) +5, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Perform +6, Profession (cook) +5, Ride +5, Search +7, Swim +2, Wilderness Lore +4.
Feats: Dodge, Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Mobility.
Possessions: Quarterstaff, longbow with quiver of arrows.

Although Maid Marian is a later addition to the traditional tales, she is one of the most endearing characters of the Robin Hood legend. The ward of Abbot Hugo, Marian is sent to Kirklees Abbey as a novice of the order and is later used as currency when Hugo asked Isambart de Belame for soldiers to aid in the hunt for Robin Hood. Robin rescued her from this fate, and the pair fell in love and eventually married.

Some of the tales place Marian as the daughter of Sir Richard of the Lee, a knight Robin helps in various ways depending on which version of his legend one reads. In the movie *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, Isambart is replaced by the Sheriff of Nottingham as Marian's unwanted suitor. There are, perhaps, more versions of Marian throughout the myriad versions of Robin's story than there are of Robin!

In the old ballads, Marian does not appear at all. She was originally the figure of the May Queen in a traditional English Morris dance. Since dances based on Robin's ballads were often performed at the same time as those of the Morris, the distinction between the two became blurred over time, and the much-celebrated romance between the pair became a part of nearly every version of the story that followed.

Will Scarlet

Male human, 10th-level rogue

Strength	16 (+3)	Fort. Save	+5
Dexterity	18 (+4)	Ref. Save	+11
Constitution	15 (+2)	Will Save	+3
Intelligence	14 (+2)	Alignment	CG
Wisdom	11 (0)	Speed	30
Charisma	12 (+1)	Size	M (5' 10")

Armor Class	16	Melee Attack	+10/+5
Hit Points	62	Ranged Attack	+11/+6

Special: Sneak attack +5d6, uncanny dodge, crippling strike, proficient with club, crossbow, dagger, dart, mace, quarterstaff, sap, shortbow, short sword, and light armor.
Skills: Bluff +7, Climb +16, Disable Device +9, Disguise +10, Escape Artist +12, Forgery +5, Gather Information +5, Hide +16, Innuendo +5, Intimidate +5, Intuit Direction +3, Jump +6, Knowledge (Sherwood) +6, Listen +5, Move Silently +13, Open Locks +9, Pick Pockets +10, Search +8, Sense Motive +3, Spot +3, Swim +4, Use Rope +8, Wilderness Lore +4.

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Martial Weapon Proficiency (longbow), Mobility.
Possessions: Leather armor, short sword, dagger, longbow with quiver of arrows.

Will Scarlet (sometimes spelled "Scarlett") was one of Robin's oldest companions and certainly the most outspoken in his views of the Normans. Some of the tales have him as Robin's head man on the farm at Loxley, others as one of the outlaws he met and brought into his band during his early escapades. *Prince of Thieves* even portrays Will as Robin's half-brother, the son of Robin's father's second wife.

Will is often portrayed as a wild card: well-meaning but often rebellious against Robin's leadership of the band. Despite this, he never fails to be loyal to Robin's cause, in spite of some of the dodgy forms in which that loyalty might manifest.

Friar Tuck

Male human, 5th-level cleric, 1st-level rogue

Strength	16 (+3)	Fort. Save	+7
Dexterity	14 (+2)	Ref. Save	+5
Constitution	17 (+3)	Will Save	+8
Intelligence	14 (+2)	Alignment	NG
Wisdom	18 (+4)	Speed	30
Charisma	15 (+2)	Size	M (5' 9")
Armor Class	14	Melee Attack	+6
Hit Points	34	Ranged Attack	+5

Special: Sneak attack +1d6, turn undead, proficient with simple weapons, all types of armor, and shields.
Skills: Bluff +5, Concentration +7, Diplomacy +4, Disguise +5, Escape Artist +4, Gather Information +6, Heal +11, Hide +4, Innuendo +6, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (religion) +8, Knowledge (Sherwood) +4, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Profession (brewer) +5, Profession (cook) +5, Sense Motive +7, Spot +5, Wilderness Lore +5.
Feats: Cleave, Dodge, Martial Weapon Proficiency (longbow), Power Attack.
Possessions: Leather armor, quarterstaff, longbow with quiver of arrows.
Spells (5/4/3/2): **0-level:** *cure minor wounds* x2, *detect magic, light, purify food and drink;* 1st-level: *bless, cure light wounds* x2, *shield of faith;* 2nd-level: *hold person, cure moderate wounds, know alignment;* 3rd-level: *cure serious wounds, prayer.*
Domain Spells: 1st-level: *entropic shield;* 2nd-level: *aid;* 3rd-level: *magic circle against evil.* (Friar Tuck's domains are Good and Luck.)

Another (like Marian) late addition to the tales of Robin Hood, Tuck is a jovial, fat priest possessing surprising agility given his size. With a penchant for food and ale, Friar Tuck provides some form of comic relief to many of the later tales.

As well as being the spiritual guide for the outlaw band, Tuck is a skilled healer and is no amateur with the quarterstaff or bow. The man first met Robin in the Fountain Dale region of Sherwood, tricking the outlaw leader into carrying his fat frame across a stream. Since that meeting, Tuck became a loyal and important addition to Robin's band of merry men.

Alan-a-Dale

Male human, 8th-level bard

Strength	12 (+1)	Fort. Save	+4
Dexterity	16 (+3)	Ref. Save	+9
Constitution	14 (+2)	Will Save	+8
Intelligence	16 (+3)	Alignment	NG
Wisdom	14 (+2)	Speed	30
Charisma	18 (+4)	Size	M (6' 1")
Armor Class	15	Melee Attack	+7/+2
Hit Points	45	Ranged Attack	+9/+4

Special: Bardic music, bardic knowledge, proficient with all simple weapons, longbow, light and medium armor, and shields.
Skills: Appraise +9, Balance +9, Bluff +11, Climb +5, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +12, Escape Artist +11, Gather Information +11, Hide +8, Innuendo +7, Knowledge (Sherwood) +5, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Perform +15, Sense Motive +5.
Feats: Dodge, Expertise, Improved Disarm, Mobility.
Possessions: Leather armor, quarterstaff, longbow with quiver of arrows.
Spells (3/4/4/2): 0-level: *dancing lights, mage hand, prestidigitation;* 1st-level: *grease, charm person, expeditious retreat, sleep;* 2nd-level: *invisibility, cure moderate wounds, pyrotechnics, enthrall;* 3rd-level: *displacement, haste.*

Alan-a-Dale is one of the most mysterious characters in the Robin legend. He appears in the tales infrequently as more of an ally of Robin and his men than an actual member of the band. To add to the mystique, Alan also appears in the tales of Ivanhoe, but again we learn little of the character from his appearance there.

His connection with Robin begins with his love, the lady Eleanor, who was to be married against her will to a Norman noble. After meeting with Alan and hearing his sad tale, Robin decides to attend the wedding, rescuing Eleanor and fleeing to Sherwood with the would-be bride. Once safely home, Friar Tuck married Alan and Eleanor in witness of the outlaw band, and the pair became the honored guests of Robin's band whenever they traveled through Sherwood.

Alan is a minstrel and storyteller by trade and is occasionally used as a narrator for the tales, particularly in theatrical enactments of the legends of Robin Hood.

Robert de Rainault, Sheriff of Nottingham

Male human, 12th-level fighter

Strength	16 (+3)	Fort. Save	+10
Dexterity	14 (+2)	Ref. Save	+6
Constitution	15 (+2)	Will Save	+5
Intelligence	16 (+3)	Alignment	LE
Wisdom	12 (+1)	Speed	30
Charisma	15 (+2)	Size	M (5' 11")
Armor Class	20	Melee Attack	+15/+10/+5
Hit Points	65	Ranged Attack	+14/+9/+4

Special: Proficient with all simple and martial weapons, all armor, and shields.
Skills: Climb +8, Diplomacy +7, Handle Animal +7, Intimidate +6, Jump +8, Knowledge (Nottingham) +8, Listen +6, Ride +14, Sense Motive +5, Spot +7, Swim +8.
Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Dodge, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (longsword), Mobility, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Trample, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).
Possessions: Chainmail armor, large wooden shield, longsword, medium crossbow with quiver of bolts.

Robert de Rainault is, by far, the most dangerous enemy Robin has. Although his brother, Abbot Hugo, spends more time trying to track down the outlaws, Robert, as Sheriff and Chief Justice of the Forest, has far more resources available to him to aid in the task of tracking the Merry Men.

HUGO DE RAINAULT, ABBOT OF ST. MARY'S • KING RICHARD I "COEUR DE LION" • SIR GUY OF GISBURN • SIR RICHARD OF LEE • PRINCE JOHN "LACKLAND" • MUCH THE MILLER'S SON

In fact, by killing Will Scarlet, Robert had more success against Robin in the fewer times their paths crossed than Hugo, Sir Guy, or Isambart de Belame.

The Sheriff is a pompous man, secure in his position of high influence and responsibility. In fact, the only man he fears is his liege, Prince John. Despite this confidence, he severely underestimated Robin when he slew Will Scarlet. Robin, who had laid aside a special arrow scribed with the Sheriff's name from an earlier encounter between the two, was finally obliged to use it in vengeance for Will's death, planting it firmly in the forehead of this wicked man and ending his life

Much the Miller's Son

Male human, 2nd-level fighter, 1st-level rogue

Strength	13 (+1)	Fort. Save	+4
Dexterity	16 (+3)	Ref. Save	+5
Constitution	12 (+1)	Will Save	–1
Intelligence	6 (–2)	Alignment	NG
Wisdom	7 (–2)	Speed	30
Charisma	9 (–1)	Size	M (5' 8")

Armor Class	15	Melee Attack	+3
Hit Points	20	Ranged Attack	+5

Special: Sneak attack +1d6, proficient with all simple and martial weapons, all armor, and shields.
Skills: Climb +6, Disguise +2, Handle Animal +1, Hide +7, Intuit Direction +1, Jump +4, Move Silently +7, Profession (farmer) +2, Swim +5, Tumble +6.
Feats: Dodge, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (longbow).
Possessions: Leather armor, longsword, longbow with quiver of arrows.

Much is a simple man, the son of the Miller of Loxley and a friend of Robin from his pre-outlaw days. Not the most gifted individual, Much nonetheless serves Robin and the outlaws well, to the best of what ability he possesses. In the tales, his innocence and naivete serve as a counter-balance to the world-wise ways of characters such as Will Scarlet and Little John. He serves as a constant reminder to the others of why they fight against the oppression of Prince John's Norman regime.

Hugo de Rainault, Abbot of St. Mary's

Male human, 10th-level cleric

Strength	9 (–1)	Fort. Save	+8
Dexterity	11 (0)	Ref. Save	+4
Constitution	10 (0)	Will Save	+13
Intelligence	15 (+2)	Alignment	LE
Wisdom	16 (+3)	Speed	30
Charisma	16 (+3)	Size	M (6')

Armor Class	10	Melee Attack	+6/+1
Hit Points	60	Ranged Attack	+7/+2

Special: Command undead, proficient with simple weapons, all types of armor and shields.
Skills: Appraise +6, Bluff +6, Concentration +10, Diplomacy +11, Forgery +4, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (religion) +11, Listen +7, Scry +6, Sense Motive +7, Spot +5.
Feats: Empower Spell, Expertise, Extend Spell, Iron Will, Maximize Spell.
Possessions: Heavy mace, light crossbow with quiver of bolts.
Spells (6/5/5/4/3/2): 0-level: *cure minor wounds* x2, *detect magic, light, resistance, read magic;* 1st-level: *bane, cure light wounds* x2, *sanctuary, entropic shield;* 2nd-level: *hold person, enthrall, cure moderate wounds, undetectable alignment, death knell;* 3rd-level: *cure serious wounds, animate dead, magic vestment, contagion;* 4th-level: *cure critical wounds, poison, summon monster IV;* 5th-level: *circle of doom, true seeing.*
Domain Spells: 1st-level: *change self;* 2nd-level: *invisibility;* 3rd-level: *magic circle against good;* 4th-level: *confusion;* 5th-level: *dispel good.* (Abbot Hugo's domains are Evil and Trickery.)

Throughout most of the tales of Robin Hood, Abbot Hugo, moreso than his brother the Sheriff of Nottingham, appears as Robin's arch-enemy. It is through his orders, executed by his man Sir Guy of Gisburn, that Robin of Loxley was forced into becoming an outlaw, and his plots push Robert of Huntingdon into the same fate.

The Abbot is a wicked man, caring more for his own greed than matters of the church. Most of his actions are intended to result in the gain of more land or personal wealth. His concern with Robin Hood is simply that the escapades of the outlaw and his bands serve to deny him such.

The Abbot has allies in Baron Isambart de Belame and Sir Roger "The Cruel" of Doncaster and, of course, his own lackey Sir Guy. Despite this, all his attempts to bring Robin to Norman justice are for naught.

Sir Guy of Gisburn

Male human, 8th-level fighter

Strength	16 (+3)	Fort. Save	+9
Dexterity	10 (0)	Ref. Save	+2
Constitution	16 (+3)	Will Save	+2
Intelligence	8 (–1)	Alignment	LE
Wisdom	10 (0)	Speed	30
Charisma	13 (+1)	Size	M (5' 10")

Armor Class	16	Melee Attack	+11/+6
Hit Points	53	Ranged Attack	+8/+3

Special: Proficient with all simple and martial weapons, all armor, and shields.
Skills: Bluff +3, Diplomacy +3, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +3, Jump +6, Ride +8, Swim +4.
Feats: Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (longsword), Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Trample, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).
Possessions: Chainmail armor, small

wooden shield, lance, longsword, light crossbow with quiver of bolts.

Sir Guy of Gisburn is the steward of Abbot Hugo. As such, he was tasked by his liege to first bring Robin of Loxley to justice for harboring poachers and then to hunt the outlaw down once Robin had fled to the woods.

Although Guy has ambitions above his station, he possesses neither the intelligence nor the leadership qualities to achieve them. He serves loyally while he must but is constantly on the look-out for situations that he can exploit to increase his personal influence.

The man is cowardly when not surrounded by his soldiery.

King Richard I "Coeur de Lion"

Male human, 14th-level paladin

Strength	18 (+4)	**Fort. Save**	+12
Dexterity	16 (+3)	**Ref. Save**	+9
Constitution	16 (+3)	**Will Save**	+7
Intelligence	16 (+3)	**Alignment**	LG
Wisdom	17 (+3)	**Speed**	30
Charisma	19 (+4)	**Size**	M (6' 2")

Armor Class	20	**Melee Attack**	+18/+13/+9
Hit Points	76	**Ranged Attack**	+17/+12/+7

Special: Aura of courage, *detect evil*, divine grace, divine health, *lay on hands*, *remove disease* 4/week, smite evil, special mount, turn undead, proficient with all simple and martial weapons, all armor, and shields.
Skills: Climb +8, Diplomacy +16, Handle Animal +10, Intimidate +6, Jump +8, Knowledge (heraldry) +5, Knowledge (law) +10, Listen +7, Ride +18, Sense Motive +7, Spot +7, Swim +9, Wilderness Lore +6.
Feats: Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Initiative, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Spirited Charge, Weapon Focus (longsword).
Possessions: Breastplate, large wooden shield, lance, longsword, heavy crossbow with quiver of bolts.
Spells (3/2/2): 1st-level: *bless*, *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*; 2nd-level: *resist elements*, *shield other*; 3rd-level: *discern lies*, *greater magic weapon*.

Born in 1157, Richard was the third son of Henry II by Eleanor of Aquitaine. As a youth, holding the title of Duke of Aquitaine, Richard rebelled against his father and aided King Philip II of France against Henry. After Henry's death at Chinon in 1189, Richard sailed to England and was crowned at Westminster Abbey.

Richard is a warrior through and through. Although his exploits during the Third Crusade (and, perhaps, the fact that the English people needed some hope to cling to during the period of John's regency) brought him great respect among his English subjects. He spent but six months of his entire reign on English soil—the rest spent either in the Holy Land with the Crusaders, in France battling his one-time ally Philip, or (from 1192-1194) as a prisoner of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI. For the many stretches he was absent, he left his brother John as regent.

In the Robin Hood tales set during Richard's reign, it is the hope of the English that Richard will return to put an end to John's tyranny, restoring honor and justice to the land. On his return to England in 1194, he supposedly pardoned Robin and his band (possibly for their aid in putting down John's insurrection) before heading to France to fight a war from which he would never return.

In some tales, Richard appears disguised as a black knight. In one such instance, the black knight aids Robin in the rescue of Will Scarlet and Sir Richard of the Lee before revealing his true identity.

Prince John "Lackland"

Male human, 10th-level fighter

Strength	13 (+1)	**Fort. Save**	+9
Dexterity	14 (+2)	**Ref. Save**	+7
Constitution	14 (+2)	**Will Save**	+2
Intelligence	15 (+2)	**Alignment**	NE
Wisdom	8 (–1)	**Speed**	30
Charisma	13 (+1)	**Size**	M (6')

Armor Class	19	**Melee Attack**	+11/+6
Hit Points	73	**Ranged Attack**	+12/+7

Special: Proficient with all simple and martial weapons, all armor, and shields.
Skills: Climb +5, Diplomacy +6, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +3, Jump +5, Knowledge (heraldry) +5, Knowledge (law) +7, Listen +4, Ride +10, Swim +5.
Feats: Dodge, Expertise, Improved Trip, Lightning Reflexes, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Point Blank Shot, Run, Weapon Focus (heavy crossbow), Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).
Possessions: Chainmail armor, large wooden shield, dagger, longsword, heavy crossbow with quiver of bolts.

John, born in 1167, was the fourth son of Henry II. The name "Lackland" (or "Sans Terre") arose because he was granted no land by his father. His brother, Richard, granted him many land titles upon his accession, however.

John covets the crown of England from his noble brother. To this end, he is willing to grant favors and land to subordinate nobles to secure their loyalty to him against Richard, making him appear weak-willed. Being regent for much of Richard's reign did this power-lust no good whatsoever, as John became increasingly paranoid regarding his brother's return from war and the loss of the rulership he coveted. In 1193 he led an insurrection against Richard while his brother lay captive, holding Nottingham Castle until Richard managed to put down the rebellion on his return in 1194.

Even when he finally became king, John remained weak, as his trials with his barons and the Pope show. He caused England to become subject to an interdiction and was himself excommunicated by the Pope. He also discarded many of the royal powers through the agreement known as the Magna Carta.

Sir Richard of the Lee

Male human, 10th-level fighter

Strength	14 (+2)	**Fort. Save**	+8
Dexterity	14 (+2)	**Ref. Save**	+5
Constitution	12 (+1)	**Will Save**	+5
Intelligence	16 (+3)	**Alignment**	LG
Wisdom	14 (+2)	**Speed**	30
Charisma	13 (+1)	**Size**	M (5')

Armor Class	16	**Melee Attack**	+12/+7
Hit Points	65	**Ranged Attack**	+12/+7

Special: Proficient with all simple and martial weapons, all armor, and shields.
Skills: Bluff +7, Climb +9, Diplomacy +6, Handle Animal +8, Jump +9, Knowledge (heraldry) +5, Listen +6, Ride +15, Spot +6, Swim +8.
Feats: Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Quick Draw, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Trample, Weapon Focus (light crossbow), Weapon Focus (longsword).
Possessions: Scale mail armor, large wooden shield, longsword, light crossbow with quiver of bolts.

Sir Richard appears in many tales of Robin Hood. In the early ballads, he is a knight who befriends Robin, keeping an open door policy to the outlaw band at his castle should they need sanctuary. He can also be the poor knight that Robin entertains at his camp in the Lytell Geste. In the tale, the outlaw takes sympathy and aids the knight in paying off a debt owed to Abbot Hugo. Some of the modern tales make this connection and even go so far as to suggest Richard as Marian's father.

Richard is a loyal follower of King Richard and opposed to the tyrannical regency of John. A man of honor, he recognizes a similar quality in Robin Hood and accepts the man as a friend and ally (and possibly son-in-law), despite his outlaw status.

The nature of his debt to Abbot Hugo varies from tale to tale. The traditional view is that Sir Richard was forced into knighthood by English law (as a landholder) and subsequently found it impossible to meet the required tithes such a position required. Another view is that he borrowed money from St. Mary's, holding his castle and lands as security against the loan, to fund his own participation in the Crusades. Given the opportunity to gain further wealth, Hugo could not resist attempting to make sure that the debt would never be repaid.

Baron Isambart de Belame

Male human, 10th-level necromancer

Strength	12 (+1)	**Fort. Save**	+3
Dexterity	14 (+2)	**Ref. Save**	+5
Constitution	10 (0)	**Will Save**	+10
Intelligence	18 (+4)	**Alignment**	LE
Wisdom	16 (+3)	**Speed**	30
Charisma	16 (+3)	**Size**	M (6' 3")

Armor Class	12	**Melee Attack**	+6
Hit Points	23	**Ranged Attack**	+7

Special: Summon familiar, Scribe Scroll, proficient with club, dagger, heavy crossbow, light crossbow, and quarterstaff.
Skills: Alchemy +10, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +7, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (ancient history) +8, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (astrology) +7, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +6, Ride +5, Scry +10, Sense Motive +5, Spellcraft +17, Spot +5.
Feats: Brew Potion, Craft Rod, Craft Wand, Empower Spell, Enlarge Spell, Martial Weapon Proficiency (longsword), Spell Focus (Necromancy).
Possessions: Longsword, light crossbow with quiver of bolts.
Spells (5/6/6/5/5/3): 0-level: *dancing lights, detect magic, ghost sound, read magic, disrupt undead;* 1st-level: *chill touch, comprehend languages, identify, obscurement, shield, sleep;* 2nd-level: *cat's grace, darkness, ESP, forget, ghoul touch, whispering wind;* 3rd-level: *dispel magic, haste, hold person, suggestion, vampiric touch;* 4th-level: *bestow curse, contagion, emotion, scry, fear;* 5th-level: *animate dead, magic jar, nightmare.*

Isambart de Belame is a relatively modern addition to the Robin myths. He is a baron of wicked ways, sometimes (as in the *Robin of Sherwood* TV series, as Simon de Belleme) portrayed as a sorcerous figure who deals in dark magics, and at other times just another evil Norman nobleman who plagues the poor of England. The former version appears here.

Isambart, despite his decidedly un-Christian activities, was an ally of both Abbot Hugo and Roger of Doncaster, and he loaned men to Hugo to aid the Abbot in hunting down Robin and his men, in exchange for the hand of Maid Marian. Such was the reputation of the man that his home, Castle Belame, became known as Evil Hold to those who opposed his beliefs.

In the *Robin of Sherwood* series, Little John was one of Belame's servants, possessed by sorcery until, during the famous meeting at the tree-bridge, Robin managed to break the spell. Another of Robin's men, Nasir, also joined the band upon the death of his old, wicked master.

Sir Roger "The Cruel" of Doncaster

Male human, 11th-level fighter

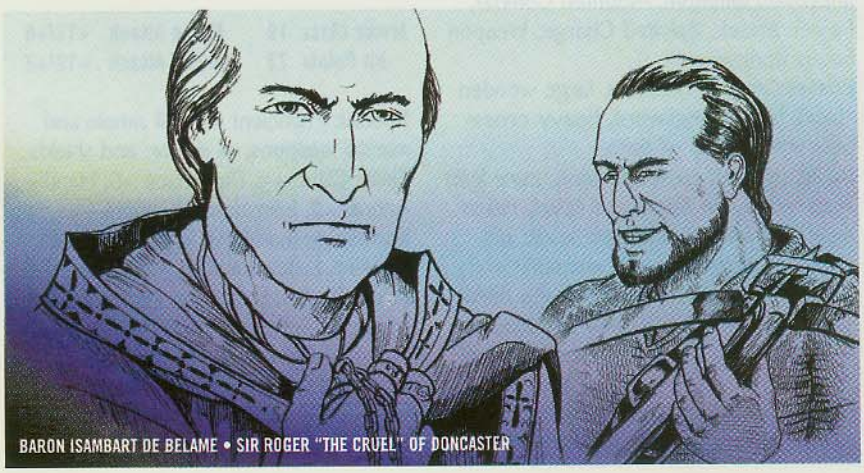
Strength	19 (+4)	**Fort. Save**	+9
Dexterity	15 (+2)	**Ref. Save**	+2
Constitution	16 (+3)	**Will Save**	+2
Intelligence	15 (+2)	**Alignment**	NE
Wisdom	14 (+2)	**Speed**	30
Charisma	15 (+2)	**Size**	M (5' 11")

Armor Class	18	**Melee Attack**	+15/+10/+5
Hit Points	89	**Ranged Attack**	+13/+8/+3

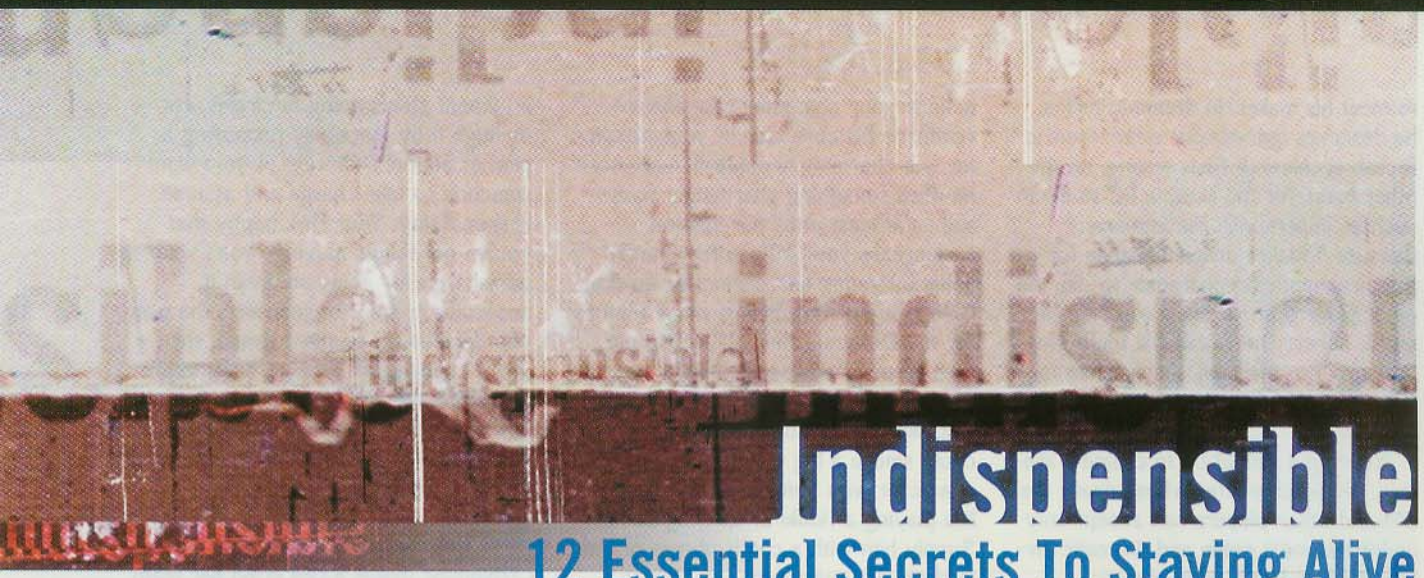
Special: Proficient with all simple and martial weapons, all armor, and shields.
Skills: Bluff +5, Climb +10, Diplomacy +6, Intimidate +7, Innuendo +5, Jump +10, Ride +8, Search +5, Spellcraft +4, Swim +10, Wilderness Lore +5.
Feats: Cleave, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Critical (longsword), Mobility, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword), Whirlwind Attack.
Possessions: Chainmail armor, large wooden shield, longsword, heavy crossbow with quiver of bolts.

An ally of Isambart de Belame and, by association, Abbot Hugo, Robin runs afoul of Sir Roger on a handful of occasions. The final meeting between the pair leaves Robin badly injured and, on being taken to Kirklees Abbey for attention, finally killed through a plot hatched by Robin's aunt, Elizabeth, the Prioress of Kirklees and Sir Roger.

Roger's nickname was not earned in vain. As a follower of one of the more wicked barons of England, he was a party to some of the more nefarious plots Robin faced. D



BARON ISAMBART DE BELAME • SIR ROGER "THE CRUEL" OF DONCASTER



Indispensible

12 Essential Secrets To Staying Alive

by Robin D. Laws

The D&D game isn't competitive; the other players are on your side. Your characters are meant to complement one another, helping each other to survive in a dungeon environment. Together, you improve your characters, gaining experience points and accumulating treasure. Your Dungeon Master isn't supposed to play favorites. When the situation dictates that a character should shuffle off this mortal coil, she'll invariably close her eyes and impartially allow him to meet his doom, no matter what.

Well, maybe not invariably. Here's a little secret: DMs hate to kill off characters. Character death slows the momentum of a session, as the deceased's comrades haul his carcass out of the dungeon, cart him through the trackless wilderness, and head to town to find a willing cleric to restore him to life. If the characters can't arrange for their expired partner's resurrection, you've left your DM twiddling her thumbs while you create a new character. If the other PCs have already reached high levels, the DM must do one of two things, neither of which feels exactly right. Either she must spend several sessions contriving to keep your fragile new PC alive, or she must allow him to start the game as a high-level character with a bundle of unearned experience points.

Now, your DM also knows she can't run a D&D campaign without the occasional, irrevocable demise of an established PC. Without this possibility, the dangers the party faces seem illusory. If she permits you to think that there's no risk involved in your PC's actions, the suspense drains out of the game. With it goes the sense of accomplishment that makes your XPs seem hard earned. So, even though it throws a session off-track, the wise DM knows enough to allow her dungeons, traps, and monsters to claim a PC every so often. It's for your own good, after all.

Still, despite what we said about the game being noncompetitive, it would be nice if those necessary PC deaths mostly happened to other players' characters, wouldn't it? Whenever a PC is about to check into the graveyard hotel, you can be sure that the DM is asking herself two questions: "Is there a plausible way for the character to survive without making it seem like I fudged?" and, "If so, is it worth the bother?"

HERE'S A LITTLE SECRET: DUNGEON MASTERS HATE TO KILL OFF CHARACTERS.

In these moments, your DM is making a calculation about her campaign's fun quotient. On one hand, by pulling a rabbit out of her hat to save your bacon, she's risking the plausibility of her campaign—and thus, the fun everybody has playing in it. If you want her to decide in favor of your PC's continuing to draw breath, you'd better have laid in a little insurance beforehand. If you've made your character an integral part of the campaign, the DM will be more likely to sacrifice a little suspension of disbelief to keep him around. If your fellow players understand how important your PC is to the campaign, they'll be more forgiving of the trick the DM uses to prevent him from dying. They'll be glad that your falling character found an opportune root to grab just before hitting the pit bottom, that the useless potion he swallowed several rooms back just happened to give him immunity to snake venom, or that a servitor of his deity was near enough to hear his prayers.

In other words, by seeing to it that your PC is much more fun alive than dead, you're giving yourself a survival edge. It's an edge worth more than the best magic armor or hardest-hitting weapons. What's more, it doesn't cost you gold or experience points. All you have to do is pay attention to the things your DM does to make her campaign fun. The more your PC helps her do so, the longer his life expectancy. Here are twelve easy tips to make your PC indispensable to a campaign's fun quotient.

8 Be Likeable

Although DMs are supposed to be impartial, they can't help but like certain characters and dislike others—check out the example in the sidebar. If you were watching the campaign unfold as a movie, you'd want the nasty character

to meet his maker. In dramatic terms, he deserves ignominious death from a foolish accident. It feels wrong, on the other hand, for the likeable PC to die in such an impersonal, random way. Because it makes dramatic sense for the unsympathetic character to die, the other players aren't likely to complain much, either. The result will feel right to them, too. After all, they've had to put up with his disagreeable antics first-hand.

Your goal should be to create a likeable, heroic character whose death the DM and other players can accept only under the most noble and dramatic circumstances. Don't make him too perfect; an annoying goody-two-shoes is just as unlikeable as a conniving wretch. He might still die someday, and he won't be immune when your own dumb decisions get him in trouble—but he's much less likely than the average, selfish PC to succumb to fungi attacks, traps, diseases, and other less-than-glamorous means of meeting his maker.

2 Be Entertaining

Sometimes being sympathetic is only part of the equation. If all of the PCs are similarly likeable, you must go further to distinguish yours as the stand-out of the lot. Do this by making him more interesting and entertaining than the others. Look at the classic heroes of adventure fiction to see what makes them appealing. Take a simple word or phrase as the basis for your character, and make it as powerful an idea as possible. Charming scoundrel, investigative genius, justice seeker, and gutsy explorer trigger stronger emotions than ordinary guy looking for treasure, handsome elf, or big guy with big axe. Keep a constant watch for actions your character can take to reinforce his core idea. If your character is a charming scoundrel, make sure he does something charmingly scandalous at least once per session.

Increase your PC's entertainment value by giving him distinctive quirks. Give him a distinguishing visual feature for the DM and other players to picture. Your justice seeker might wear an insignia representing a fearsome animal, like a bat. Your investigative genius could smoke a big pipe. Provide your character with a memorable activity, like playing a fiddle or quoting poetry. Supply him with a catch-phrase or two. In short, do everything you can to imprint yourself on the minds of the DM and fellow players. Make yourself Captain Kirk; let the other PCs be the red-shirts.

3 Keep Things Moving

This one is a little tricky, because it's something that you do as player rather than an innate trait of one of your PCs. Still, it's worth using, because it makes your DM grateful—and a grateful DM is never a bad person to have around.

Nothing gives a DM an itchy dice-finger more than boredom. If your fellow players are prone to talk every possible move into the ground before doing anything, and you see your DM squirming in her chair or rolling her eyes because the session is going nowhere, come to the rescue. Make your PC the dynamic type who takes the initiative after a reasonable amount of discussion has taken place. When an argument starts going in circles, cut through it by forcefully proposing a plan of action. Dithering players want someone to take charge and assume responsibility. Your DM, happy that you've got things moving, won't want to punish you for doing so. Even if, according to her dungeon key, the plan you decided on seems doomed, she might change her plans to make yours retroactively sensible. In this instance, you're making everyone's survival more likely, not just your own—not that there's anything wrong with that.

4 Don't Fight Other PCs

Nothing makes a DM grind her teeth like a poorly motivated battle to the death between player characters. We've already mentioned what an unexpected PC death does to a DM's plans for a session. Fights between PCs are even more frustrating because the DM has no believable way of fudging to keep the combatants alive. If you lose your temper and fight another PC, you can count on an imminent dirt nap. If the opposing PC doesn't kill you, you can bet that his player will create a replacement to seek vengeance. If that doesn't happen, it's probably because the DM got to your PC first. She doesn't have to set out to kill the offending PC; she can wait and simply withhold the benefit of the doubt the next time he gets into fatal trouble. We've already seen how unsympathetic PCs die sooner than sympathetic ones; you don't get more unsympathetic than murdering a comrade over a loot dispute or a casual insult.

MAKE YOURSELF CAPTAIN KIRK; LET THE OTHER PCS BE THE RED-SHIRTS.

Who Do You Love?

Imagine the following scenario from your DM's point of view: Because she's been a mite generous with her rulings of late, the players are getting cocky. She realizes she has to shock the players back into a sense of genuine danger. She gets her chance when two characters recklessly get into a raft on an underground river with a fast-running current. She knows there's a waterfall at the end of that river. The PCs are going to be swept down the river and over the falls. Maybe she'll give one of them a break, but not both.

One of the PCs is a braggart, a cheat, and a coward. He always wants NPCs to take risks for his character. He lies as a matter of course and bullies ordinary people for the fun of it.

The second PC, on the other hand, follows a code of honor. He won't ask his followers to take risks he won't take himself. He's honest and friendly to other PCs and NPCs alike. He's not perfect: Sometimes he loses his temper, and his grudge against orcs sometimes leads him to act rashly. But overall, he's more like the hero of a fantasy novel or TV show—that is, much more sympathetic—than the first character.

If you were DM, which one would you fudge the damage dice for?

5 Stop Fights Between Other PCs

Another way to keep the DM in a good mood is to act as the conciliator when disputes between PCs—or worse yet, between players—get ready to boil over into PC-on-PC violence.

Work to give your character some special hold over the PCs so that he can reliably break up pointless fights. If he's a good fighter, he can threaten to finish off the victor, ensuring mutual destruction for both troublemakers. If he's rich, he might step in and offer compensation to the aggrieved PC. If your fellow players regularly have their PCs duke it out with one another, your spellcaster might reserve a *hold* or *charm person* spell ready to quell them. Find out what the other PCs most want, and figure out a way to offer it to them if they keep a lid on their conflict.

Even if the DM doesn't show her gratitude by giving your PC a break when needed, you're still increasing the odds of his survival. When your party loses a crucial member or two to mindless squabbling, the survivors are more likely to get picked off by the monsters you were all supposed to be fighting in the first place.

6 Cultivate Off-Beat Skills

While off-beat abilities might not seem to make the same contribution to your survival as good, old-fashioned *fireball* spells and fighting skills, they can actually be even more valuable than the old reliables. Try to guess where the DM's campaign is going, and what special skills, spells, or other abilities you'll need to prosper there. Give your PC unique abilities. Watch as the DM comes to depend on them to make the story work. She now has a stake in keeping your PC healthy.

Skills and feats are the best tools for this strategy because they're non-transferable. If your PC has a ring that allows her and those near her to breathe underwater, your DM can safely introduce an underwater dungeon. Unfortunately, she doesn't necessarily need you to survive for the adventure to continue, because any other PC can pick up your ring when your character swims with the fishes. See the sidebar for another example of cultivating offbeat skills.

7 Form Bonds to a Community

DMs like to play particular characters on a regular basis, too. Their best way to do so is to create a home base for the PCs. They can then play the irascible inn-keeper, gossiping cobbler, love-struck fishmonger, and other members of an ever-expanding cast of supporting characters. However, PCs are notorious for their wanderlust and might at any time abandon the settlement where all of the DM's favorite NPCs dwell. Now she has to come up with a whole new cast of supporting characters to liven up the next town—which she can also lose touch with at any time.

Make your PC the DM's best friend by giving him a tie to her favorite home base. Your PC could get married, buy a piece of land, invest in a business, or take a vow to protect the locals. This obligation keeps the PC—and the rest of the party along with him—around the settlement, giving the DM the chance to develop and refine her supporting cast. You'll get other benefits from this choice, too; if you establish yourself as a favored son of a community, its citizens will support you with food, shelter, and equipment when needed. They might even form a militia to help you fight threats to the town's safety.

Your connection to the community enriches the campaign, making it seem more real and lending sympathy to the entire party. Your DM will notice that this beloved part of her game depends on your PC's involvement and that the party might, in the event of your character's demise, again resort to rootless wandering.

8 Befriend an Important NPC

DMs like characters who make connections to the important NPCs in their settings. It's easier to come up with story hooks for these PCs than it is for anti-social loners who avoid ties to others. Because your PC's relationship to an NPC makes it easier for the DM to get her stories started, she'll want to keep him around to take advantage of it.

The type of NPC you might logically befriend depends on the class and demeanor of your PC. A roguish malcontent might bond with a bandit chieftain. A wizard could parlay a mutual interest in alchemical research into a friendship with the ancient, bearded spellcaster who lives in the tower outside town. The types of stories they'll set you on also varies according to the sort of NPC you befriend. The bandit chieftain knows about ripe targets for ambush; the spellcaster has information on hidden magic treasures.

9 Fight Boredom

Some players like to tweak the DM by doing things that seem deliberately calculated to throw her off. They most often do this when bored or restless. Ideally, DMs should look for signs of player discontent and do things to head them off. Not all DMs, especially beginning ones, are good at this, and they are unable to sustain player interest all the time. Even the best DM can lose her player's full attention in the midst of a marathon session, when everybody's blood sugar gets low and the caffeine starts to wear off.

A favored tactic of the bored, mischievous player is to attack and try to kill an NPC he senses is important to

Who would have imagined my extensive knowledge of kobolds would prove so handy?

Your DM seems to be steering your group toward an extended sojourn in a land populated by various tribes of kobolds. After a session or two, it becomes apparent that she's worked out detailed tribal politics between various kobold clans. To make your character extra-useful, fit your PC into the DM's plans by having him learn to speak the kobold tongue or by giving him the Knowledge (kobold society) skill.

The rest of the PCs can now participate in the DM's kobold-oriented plotlines thanks to your expenditure of skill points. The DM's hard work on her pet project is rewarded, and she can use your PC to show it off. When your PC's life is threatened, the DM should realize that she'll lose her plot device if the character loses his life. If not, you might wish to have your character cry out in the kobold language as the ogre inches him toward the edge of the cliff....

Your Friend, the High Sherrif

Let's say that you set up shop in the village nearest to a dungeon you plan to explore. On the way back from a bout of dungeon-delving, you encounter the high sheriff and her men. You haven't done anything illegal and have no reason to fear the authorities. Why has the DM put this encounter into the adventure?

She might be actively giving you an opportunity to connect yourself to the wider world around the dungeon, or she might just be adding texture and detail to her setting.

In either case, you should greet the sheriff and introduce yourself. Later you can stop by her manor for a courtesy call. Offer your services in the event of an emergency. Become her drinking buddy or her opponent at darts. The next time the DM wants to get the party started on an adventure, she can use the friendship you've developed: The sheriff has heard that brigands are gathering in the woods, so she asks you to investigate.

the DM's ongoing plot. He might just as easily destroy a critical artifact or start a pointless bar brawl to liven things up a bit. In any case, his actions force the DM to discard her prepared material for the session or else frantically dream up a way for her plot to continue.

If one of your friends is known for this sort of thing, and you sense that he's getting bored, you can head him off by giving him something to do. Try convincing him to go out on a scouting mission, experiment with the weird object you found back in the last dungeon, or work on his parrying technique. Offer to go with him, so it doesn't seem obvious that you're herding him out of harm's way. Maybe the DM will pick up on your cue and give you a nice, distracting rabid bear to fight. Maybe not; if you do it with the proper subtlety, she might not notice at all. Still, this tactic contributes to your survival, because you're much more likely to die stupidly when the DM is flustered and trying to get her story back on track than when she's dealing with player responses to situations she knows well.

10 Protect NPCs

If you fail to spot the symptoms of boredom before they appear, you might find yourself dealing with an attack on an NPC whose survival is obviously critical to the DM's ongoing story. Even if it makes sense for the particular PC to try to dispatch the NPC, you know your DM won't be happy if he succeeds. When you see this kind of fight breaking out, step in. Using the same methods of persuasion given for Step 5, try to effect a reconciliation. Offer to fight as the NPC's champion in a duel of honor; the attacking PC can work out his grievance by wounding you a little instead of killing the NPC. If all else fails, join the fight on the NPC's side. If you've earned the confidence of your fellow players, they ought to follow your lead. If nothing else, you've delayed the fight long enough for the DM to work on a way to reduce tension between the PC and her NPC. However you solve the problem, you'll have earned her gratitude and kept the story on safer ground.

11 Antagonize a Villain

If, over the course of a linked series of adventures, you realize that you're struggling against a grand, behind-the-scenes villain, make it personal. Swear vengeance on the miscreant! If your DM approves, invent a background history for your character that includes a prior grudge against him. Keep reminding the DM and other players of your vow of implacable vengeance. If you meet the bad guy in circumstances that prevent the two of you from going at it, take advantage of the chance to insult and belittle him. Make him swear eternal vengeance against you.

Angering a powerful villain might seem like a backward way of ensuring your PC's survival. But think again: You're doing what screenwriters call "laying pipe." You're setting up a dramatic possibility to be resolved later in the story. It will feel wrong if you and the villain don't finally end up in a climactic, toe-to-toe battle in the midst of a collapsing dungeon or on the lip of a seething volcano. Once you've foreshadowed this ultimate confrontation, your DM will protect you as much as she believably can from the more boring hazards you'll face until then. Since endings in which evil triumphs over good are disappointing, you might even get a positive nudge or two when the big day finally comes.

12 Get Cursed

The curse offers another unorthodox way of ensuring your survival. If you see an opportunity to call a terrible curse down on your head, and can do it in a way that makes sense for your character, you can lay pipe for an epic storyline in which you struggle to free yourself from its dread effects.

Let's say that you find a door in a tomb complex, with ancient sigils warning of a curse against the one who breaks its seal. If you shrug your shoulders and say, "Well, we could really use the treasure on the other side of that door," your motivation doesn't seem especially epic. But if you come up with a noble, thrilling reason to risk the curse, you're setting up the kind of story most DMs won't be able to resist. You might deliver, for example, a stirring speech about the magic item you're hunting for, and how it will help you to depose the cruel tyrant who defiles your homeland's throne. In fact, you're setting up two stories: The battle against the bad king, using the magic item, and the struggle to free yourself from the curse. During the latter, you can scour libraries for secrets of the tomb, travel from city to city looking for faith healers to lift the curse, and generally give your DM lots of ways to motivate her future adventures.

And, just as in Step 11, you've set in motion a story that requires you to be alive and kicking at least until it wraps up. Getting cursed might just be the smartest thing you ever do. D

YOU'RE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO DIE STUPIDLY WHEN THE DUNGEON MASTER IS FLUSTERED

Plotbending

Shake It, Don't Break It

by JD Wiker • illustrated by Scott Fischer

Dungeon Masters hate being second-guessed by their players. It's especially tough when the DM has invested hours in preparation and multiple game sessions to set up a killer plot twist, only to have a player casually announce, "I'll bet the queen's a doppleganger," mere moments before the DM can reveal that the queen is, well, a doppleganger. It's anticlimactic at least, humiliating at worst.

One solution for the DM is to introduce plot twists that are so startling that there's no way the players can see them coming. If all of the DM's foreshadowing points in one direction but the adventure suddenly goes another, not only will the players be surprised but they'll never again be so certain that they know what happens next. Used well, such radical plot twists—call them "plotbenders"—are as much fun for players to tackle as they are for the DM to unleash.

Introducing a plotbender is as simple as dropping one plot and picking up a new one. Of course, the players need a good reason to embrace the new plot. Otherwise, it's just a distraction, not a new direction. The DM must create a situation that leaves the players too busy with their new situation to spend time pursuing their previous plans. In *Year of the Phoenix* (see sidebar), the heroes had to adapt to their new situation because they had no idea how they had arrived in the future, let alone how to get back. In a D&D game, a group of adventurers in a cave complex slowly filling up with water are almost guaranteed to give up their scheme of hauling out hundreds of pounds of treasure while they focus on their rapidly diminishing air supply. The bottom line is that the bent plot must be as interesting and important as the one it replaces.

The Rules of Plotbending

Sudden radical shifts in a roleplaying session give the players opportunities to think on their feet, solving problems they didn't anticipate when they first set out. But overusing the plot twist or timing it poorly can spoil a session. To use plotbenders to their best advantage, keep these four rules in mind:

1 Avoid "Channel Surfing"

Change plots rarely. One of the main reasons for a plotbender is to catch the players off guard and give them a new challenge, one for which they weren't necessarily prepared. If your players become used to plotbenders, they might end up carting around equipment for every conceivable contingency, making the game one long manifest and plotbenders a lot less fun. The campaign then risks degenerating into a battle of wits between the players and the DM.

Great Moments in Plotbending

Some classic AD&D adventures have employed plotbenders over the years. *The Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan* dropped the adventurers into the bottom level of the dungeon instead of letting them work their way in from the front door. The players begin *Vecna Lives!* as a highly powerful group of pregenerated characters—whom the villain promptly kills, leaving the players' own characters to pick up the pieces.

One roleplaying game built its entire premise on a plotbender. Martin Wixted's *Year of the Phoenix* employed a classic "bait and switch." The rulebook instructed players to create members of a government strike force, gearing characters toward the kind of high-tech skills a near-future counter-terrorist team would need. But the Gamemaster's sourcebook and the first adventure sent the strike force unexpectedly to a post-apocalyptic future, where the ability to repair or fly a space shuttle meant nothing in a world that didn't even remember the United States of America, let alone space shuttles.

2 Suspend Disbelief, Don't Hang It

Although the players have implicitly agreed to suspend their disbelief to participate in a fantasy roleplaying game, they'll go only so far. Unless the campaign is loaded with bizarre occurrences, players won't buy that the ground suddenly yawns open to swallow whole their arch-enemy. But roleplayers will accept the most unlikely turn of events if the DM establishes the possibility beforehand. By the same token, sometimes a completely unbelievable coincidence works in the DM's favor, as the players try desperately to deduce how unrelated events are "secretly" connected.

3 Never Punish the Players

The plot twist cannot serve as a deus ex machina—a sudden change in plot should rarely solve adventurers' problems for them. The corollary to this rule is that the plot twist shouldn't "punish" the players. If they muddle through the most diabolical mysteries and prevail against almost insurmountable odds, their reward shouldn't be that their nemeses are miraculously rescued by the arrival of the new plot. The players might see such plotbending as revenge for solving the DM's puzzle ahead of schedule. Plotbenders should seem like delaying tactics, not replacing the original story but building anticipation for the real confrontation later.

4 Seize the Moment

After a certain point in any adventure, the unannounced arrival of a new plot serves only to frustrate the players. Gauging the right moment to unleash a plotbender is something of an art, but the rule of thumb is that the introduction of the new plot cannot snatch away a well-deserved victory from the players' grasp. It might hit while they are plotting their next move, or recovering from a battle, or even mere moments after that hard-won victory, but if it takes away their sense of accomplishment, then it has come at the wrong time.

Knowing When To Bend

Plotbending works best when the DM has a fair grasp of the art of storytelling. Some kinds of plots really need to be carried out to their conclusion. A "day in the life" storyline won't make much sense if a once-in-a-lifetime event occurs. A forced alliance with the characters' enemy usually comes after the plot has suddenly changed, rather than before. A lighthearted romp that suddenly turns deadly serious will teach players never to trust lighthearted romps!

On the other hand, several classic scenarios lend themselves well to sudden derailment: intrigue, romance, mystery, suspense, and drama, just to name a few. But the best might be heroic quests and, of course, the standard dungeon crawl.

Dungeon Crawl

Slogging through forgotten ruins in search of treasure just cries out for a sudden departure from the mundane. Dungeon-crawling can become mechanical: scout ahead, engage the enemy, loot the place, and move on. But if the players aren't interested in other kinds of storylines—intrigue, mystery, and so on—a natural disaster in the middle of their excursion can inject some much needed excitement.

The best time to spring a plot shift is when the players are no longer particularly interested in the consequences of their characters' actions; it's a sure sign that they're bored. But the DM should be careful about springing the new plot immediately—fire works on short notice, for example, but a flood or earthquake needs a bit more setup to seem believable. It might be best to wait until the next session, or to try a man-made plotbender, such as a sudden uprising, an arrest, or even just another group arriving on the scene with the intent of doing a little "claim-jumping." This last is particularly effective when the players are growing complacent about leaving the dungeon whenever they've run out of healing spells.

SLOGGING THROUGH FORGOTTEN RUINS IN SEARCH OF TREASURE JUST CRIES OUT FOR A SUDDEN DEPARTURE FROM THE MUNDANE.

Quests

Adventurers generally have a great deal invested in heroic quests. There's almost always a consequence for failure, and players are rarely willing to let their characters suffer a statistical penalty or even just a loss of reputation. But it's their single-minded tendency to focus on the goal that makes them ripe for a radical departure from their plans.

The best time to hit the adventurers with a plotbender during a quest is either just before they reach the object of their quest or shortly before they return with proof of their victory. The

drawback to interrupting the quest is that the players will resent not being given a chance to finish it later. This makes plotbending in these circumstances a bit more like a plot detour than a derailment, but it's a useful tool for emphasizing the urgency of the quest. If the players believe they have two weeks before they suffer any repercussions for failure, it's far more difficult for them to take the situation seriously.

If they face a serious—and unrelated—delay, the DM reinforces the notion that the rest of the world doesn't take a time out while they take care of business. Alternatively, the DM can use the plot shift to deliberately bring about the heroes' failure. In the right group, how the characters deal with the consequences of failure might say more about their heroism than succeeding does.

A FIRE IS EASY TO WHIP UP ON SHORT NOTICE, ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING HOW CARELESS MOST ADVENTURERS ARE WITH OPEN FLAMES.

Classic Plotbenders

Some events work better than others at bending the plot. DMs who know their playing groups particularly well will already have several ideas for plotbenders that would be just right for their campaigns. Most will fall into one of two categories, each with its own strengths and drawbacks.

Natural Disasters

Some of the best plotbenders are the simplest. Natural disasters can disrupt the lives of entire populations—including heroes—and on the "believability scale," they rank right at the top.

Fires: A fire is easy to whip up on short notice, especially considering how careless most adventurers are with open flames. It has the advantage of sealing off passages and pathways, filling enclosed spaces with asphyxiating smoke, and traveling from location to location if unchecked.

Example: The adventurers track a warlord to his lair in a crumbling castle. But as they are about to confront him, they smell smoke. An earlier encounter with the warlord's sentries has started a fire, and the adventurers have a choice to make: fight the fire and lose their prey, fight their enemy and risk the flames, or join forces to fight the flames and then continue their disagreement out in the fresh air.

Flood: A few million gallons of rushing water exploit a couple of common weaknesses of adventurers: the inability to swim or to handle a boat. Floods also tend to spread in an even more predictable pattern than fire, but they require a logical explanation for why the water level is rising. An underground flood—say, in a cavern complex—also puts a serious time limit on the adventurers. There isn't a whole lot of time for side-treks when the air is running out.

Example: Delving in a forgotten tomb, the adventurers are unaware that a dam has burst and water is pouring into the underground complex behind them. How soon do they notice the air getting stale? The longer they wait to exit the tomb, the longer they'll have to hold their breath while they swim for the surface—and the object of their quest in the tomb is a golden sarcophagus weighing half a ton.

Earthquakes: Earthquakes can work especially well when the heroes are underground or among constructions. Passages are blocked, innocents are trapped, friends and enemies alike are wiped out—the entire playing field is completely restructured. Outdoors, earthquakes work less well, but avalanches, rockslides, and mudslides can accomplish much the same effect, and if the adventurers are on a coastline, a good seismic wave can ruin their whole day. Indoors or out, nothing creates so much chaos so effectively as the ground bucking violently for about ten seconds.

Example: The ancient citadel the adventurers are exploring stands on the edge of a cliff—which gives way during an earth tremor. Suddenly the adventurers find themselves in a crumbling building leaning precariously over a 500-foot drop. Doorways once at floor level are now windows high up on the slanted wall or the distant ceiling, and windows are now trapdoors with a very long fall. Without the aid of magic, the adventurers have a long trip out—but just how long will the buildings hold still for them?

Weather: Weather is the easiest natural disaster to justify to the players. Heavy rainstorms, high winds, tornadoes, and hurricanes happen all the time. They can erase landmarks, roads, and entire settlements in the space of a few hours. Better yet, the more extreme the weather, the harder it is to fight, cast spells, see, or sometimes even to stand up!

Example: The key element to a twisted assassination plot lies at the heart of a deep forest. To clear the name of an ally, the adventurers must retrieve evidence from a nearly forgotten graveyard. En route, however, the wind begins to pick up, and soon it's all they can do to hang on to the whipping trees, let alone follow their ancient map—assuming it doesn't get swept away! When the storm finally lets up, the adventurers must pick their way through the twisted wreckage of an entire forest to reach their goal.

Unnatural Disasters

Depending on the campaign, your plot-shattering disasters need not be entirely natural phenomena. Terrorist attacks and assassination attempts spread chaos with little notice, and they leave no room for immediate retribution—damage control and search-and-rescue come first. Such tactics are
best used when the DM needs a sudden event that both challenges and delays the adventurers.

Unnatural disasters are a little harder to slip by the players as plausible occurrences. The DM must usually establish some precedence, relying on the "it always happens to the other guy" mentality of the players to ensure that the plotbender takes them by surprise.

War: Nothing disrupts civilization quite like a good, old-fashioned war. From uprisings to invasions, thousands of troops moving through the countryside, setting up siege camps and blockades, levying commoners, and tasking the natural resources of any area through which they pass—these things have a way of slowing down everything adventurers try to do. Personal freedoms tend to disappear, leaving little time for the kind of "creative archaeology" adventurers are famous for, assuming such able-bodied types manage to avoid being pressed into military service. While invasions can sometimes be over relatively quickly, the subsequent occupation can keep the heroes busy for years. It's even rougher if the adventurers are on the losing side.

Example: Returning from a top-secret mission for the king of their homeland, the adventurers stumble into an invasion force that has already seized the outlying settlements of the kingdom. The enemy army confiscates their mounts and supplies, and—worse still—wants to draft them as troops against their own country. Getting word to the king is impossible, and their royal transit papers are not only useless with the enemy but could get them killed if they are discovered. The invaders have been so successful that it looks like the **next time the adventurers see the king again is when he surrenders!**

Political Upheaval: Who holds the reins of power is just as important as the power itself, and unless rulers are somehow immortal, radical abuses of power—and perhaps some tough times for the heroes—are just an assassination away. Something so minor as the imprisonment of a friendly official or a patron can thwart some of the best-laid plans, and the heroes will be lucky to avoid arrest themselves. Even worse is a full-scale coup, with the heroes either running for their lives or starting all over again with the new occupants of the seats of power.

Example: The heroes discover a plot to discredit the high priest of a friendly religion. The queen wants to prove his disloyalty to the king, and the heroes have an informer who has agreed to testify to the king against his queen. But before the fateful moment arrives, an ambitious general seizes the entire palace and declares himself the new ruler. All previous bets are off. Assuming they can get past the general's loyal troops, the heroes might find they have to ally themselves with the queen to save the king from execution.

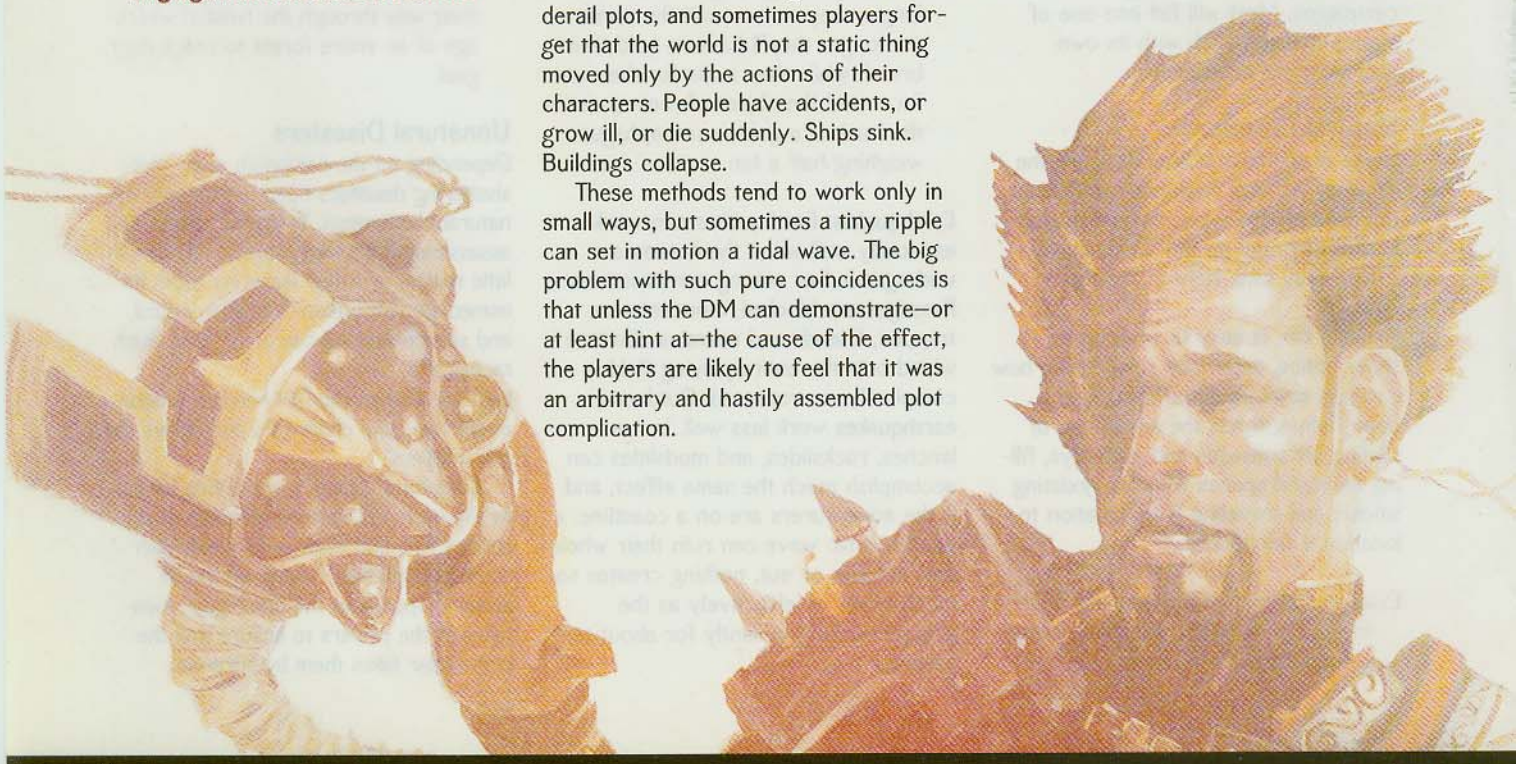
Accidents: The fickle finger of fate can derail plots, and sometimes players forget that the world is not a static thing moved only by the actions of their characters. People have accidents, or grow ill, or die suddenly. Ships sink. Buildings collapse.

These methods tend to work only in small ways, but sometimes a tiny ripple can set in motion a tidal wave. The big problem with such pure coincidences is that unless the DM can demonstrate—or at least hint at—the cause of the effect, the players are likely to feel that it was an arbitrary and hastily assembled plot complication.

Example: Just before a delve early in their careers, the adventurers were involved in a bar brawl that utterly destroyed a tavern. Left without a means of making a living, the tavernkeeper joined the local constabulary and, over the years, rose through the ranks to become a respected sheriff and finally a landed knight. But he has never forgotten the adventurers who left him destitute for several months before he started on his new career. Now the adventurers have discovered that the local guilds are under the sway of a vampire. The only person who can provide the hundred soldiers they need to prevent any escapes when they purge the town of its undead is, of course, the tavernkeeper knight, who wouldn't help them even if he did believe them. Can they regain his trust before it's too late?

NOTHING DISRUPTS CIVILIZATION QUITE LIKE A GOOD, OLD- FASHIONED WAR.

These are just a few examples of ways that a DM can avoid being second-guessed by the players. Not every group has this problem, of course, but at the very least, a little plotbending now and then reminds the players to expect the unexpected.



The Hero with 1d1000 Faces

A Random Adventure Generator

by William J. White

The 1st-Edition AD&D DUNGEON MASTER Guide *included a "random dungeon generator" that could create a dungeon labyrinth: roll the dice, check the table, draw the result on a map, check for monsters, and—*voilà!*—instant dungeon. But, while handy in a pinch, it was disappointing for all the questions it didn't answer: What was this place? Why were all these monsters here? What was the logic behind it all?*

In the second edition of the DUNGEON MASTER Guide, *the random dungeon generator is nowhere to be found, perhaps with good reason. The "random campaign generator" in* DRAGON Magazine *#228 seems to sum up the current attitude toward attempts to use dice to come up with adventures. Played strictly for laughs, it's like a glorified "mad lib": The user can fill in the blanks to find that the epic quest consists of delivering a singing telegram to a colossal space hamster. Funny, sure—but not terribly helpful to the DM who needs a serious adventure to run—and soon!*

A more helpful approach is to recognize that roleplaying adventures are basically stories like any other. The DM's job is to come up with the framework of a story in which the PCs can be the heroes. To create these stories, DMs sometimes need inspiration.

This "random adventure generator" lets DMs quickly invent coherent adventure frameworks that can be developed into full adventures. It relies on the notion that most heroic tales have the same basic structure: A hero rescues or avenges a victim who has fallen prey to a villain, overcoming various obstacles by means of his or her own abilities as well as by the "donations" of aid from various helpers, including good wizards, whimsical fairies, and even clever townspeople. Success is rewarded and failure met with punishment at the conclusion of the story—or, in the case of the D&D game, at the end of the adventure.

Designing a random adventure plot consists of four basic steps:

1. **Defining the initial situation,** in which the DM establishes the villain, the victim, and their relationship.
2. **Getting the heroes involved,** in which the DM invents a way to inform the heroes of a potential adventure.
3. **Introducing complications,** in which the DM chooses hindering "obstacles" and helpful "donations."
4. **Determining rewards and penalties,** in which the DM notes potential gains and losses to the heroes.

Step One: Define the Initial Situation

The DM has to determine the two critical roles in the adventure: victim and villain. The victim is oppressed or threatened by the villain. The villain might seek to deprive the victim of something (or someone) he or she holds dear, prevent the victim from achieving a goal or ambition, or withhold

some inheritance or reward that the victim has earned or deserves. Roll 1d10 on Table 1 and 1d10 on Table 2 to determine the basic description of each character. Use your imagination to add the necessary details, drawing upon the existing campaign background and PC biographies where possible and inventing the rest. The victim might be imprisoned, ensorcelled, under a curse, on the run, falsely accused, bereaved of a loved one, about to be sent off to certain death, bilked of land or fortune, or otherwise in danger. The villain might be directing his or her efforts to ruin the victim, or the victim's plight might be incidental to the villain's plans.

Give the villain some henchmen: An evil sorceress might have charmed and enslaved warriors, an unscrupulous merchant could have hired thugs, an unwelcome suitor might have his rakish friends, and so forth. In general, henchmen are more numerous but individually less powerful than the heroes.

Select a stronghold or base of operations for the villain; this should be well defended by traps and guards or by secrecy and concealment. The evil sorceress might occupy a villa on an otherwise deserted isle, the unscrupulous merchant might work from a caravanserai where everyone is in his pay, the unwelcome suitor might live on a yacht, and so forth.

Example: The DM rolls 8 (monks of an isolated abbey) for the victim and 7 (high priestess of a dark cult) for the villain. Considering the results, he writes, "The hermit-vintners of Mount Bacchus are threatened by a priestess of Hecate, who wants them to abandon the god of revels to worship her dark goddess and create a vintage that causes its imbibers to engage in rage-filled destruction rather than joyful merriment. The high priestess commands several secret acolytes among the hermit-vintners as well as a small troop of zombies that she has created. She operates from a secret shrine in a mausoleum in the hermits' graveyard. Her presence is unknown to the hermit-vintners, though she sends the zombies to harass and terrorize the hermits almost every night."

Later, the DM can flesh out the priestess's motivations and history: where she came from, why she hates servants of Bacchus, and other details. Perhaps she can't progress further in the hierarchy of Hecate without performing a truly wicked deed—or perhaps the players will never know.

Table 1: The Victim

1d10	Result
1	A family member or old friend of a PC, or even a PC
2	An honest tradesman or merchant
3	A beautiful princess (or handsome prince)
4	A poor but proud peasant youth
5	A scrappy apprentice, squire, or cadet
6	A good-hearted duke or wise queen
7	A washed-up hero
8	The monks of an isolated abbey
9	The peaceful inhabitants of a small village
10	A fairy creature or misunderstood monster

THE DM HAS TO DETERMINE THE TWO CRITICAL ROLES IN THE ADVENTURE: VICTIM AND VILLAIN

Step Two: Get the Heroes Involved

Once the villain has appeared, a hero must somehow be dispatched to oppose that villain. In studies of myths and fairy tales, the way in which the hero learns of the villain's activities is sometimes called "mediation." Roll 1d10 on Table 3 to determine how the heroes learn of the adventure.

Example: The DM rolls a 3 (The Bard's Tale) on the Mediations table. He writes, "The heroes encounter a troupe of minstrels who stage a play in the village where the PCs are resting and buying supplies. The play recounts the tale of how the goddess Hecate, despising Bacchus for his revelry and merry-making, enchanted his wine to turn his followers into maddened maenads who ripped him to shreds. The play is well received, and the playwright takes the stage to explain that it is a true story. He says he learned it from the hermit-vintners of nearby Mt. Bacchus, who even now are harried by the Dark Goddess and might no longer be able to create the fine wine that everyone in the audience has enjoyed."

Heroic PCs usually leap at the opportunity to help someone in distress. If they don't take the bait, however, the DM has two choices: move on to the next adventure or encourage the PCs to do something. Usually, the first option is best. At some later time, the PCs can learn that the villain was successful, and they should be made to realize that it was their failure to act that made the

Table 2: The Villain

1d10	Result
1	A former ally or seeming friend of the PCs
2	A nefarious and scheming royal official or advisor
3	A rich and unscrupulous merchant or guildmaster
4	An unwelcome suitor
5	A ruthless and ambitious baron or general
6	An Amazon queen
7	The high priest of a dark cult
8	A cutthroat pirate captain or bandit chief
9	A cruel sorcerer
10	A dragon, demon, or other cunning monster

villain's victory possible. Whether this motivates the PCs in the future depends upon them.

In the case of this random adventure example, if the heroes decide to travel on rather than visiting Mount Bacchus, they later hear of the destruction of the hermit community in a riot of drunken violence that killed many and scattered the rest. The evil priestess lives among the ruins, and occasionally a few bottles of her maddening wine cause murder, arson, and destruction when they are imbibed by unsuspecting individuals in the nearby communities—a hook, perhaps, for a later adventure!

Table 3: Mediations

1d10	Result
1	**A Little Bird.** A magical creature or smart animal leads the heroes to the victim.
2	**Mourning Black.** The heroes hear a eulogy for a (previous or current) victim, or encounter the victim bewailing his or her ill fortune.
3	**The Bard's Tale.** A storyteller or poet relates the tale of the villain, the victim, or both.
4	**Arrival by Chance.** The heroes' travels take them to the vicinity of the villain, the victim, or both.
5	**A Cry for Help.** A messenger arrives seeking help for the victim.
6	**A Lord's Command.** A patron orders the heroes to help the victim, pursue the villain, or otherwise become involved.
7	**Paint A Rumor.** Local tales tell of the villain, the plight of the victim, or both.
8	**Evil, Pure and Simple.** The villain threatens the heroes, telling them not to meddle.
9	**Caught Redhanded.** The heroes witness an act of villainy.
10	**Ghost at the Banquet.** The ghost or spirit of a (previous or current) victim appears to the heroes.

Step Three: Devise Complications

Once the heroes have set out to stop the villain, certain events fall into place. Some are detrimental to the heroes: the villain sends out henchmen to spy upon or attack the heroes; the heroes must make journeys, defeat guardian monsters, avoid traps and ambushes, and so forth. Such events are obstacles.

Other events might prove helpful. The heroes might befriend an NPC ally or animal with useful abilities. They might learn of information that helps them defeat the villain or rescue the victim, or they might find a helpful item—a bit of magic or a device that gives them an advantage in facing the villain. Such helpful events are donations.

Together, obstacles and donations serve as complications, making each adventure different from the next.

Roll 1d3+1 to determine the number of obstacles and 1d3-1 to determine the number of donations. Note that this might mean that no donations occur: the heroes are on their own! Roll 1d10 on Table 4 and 1d10 on Table 5 for each of these complications.

Example: The DM determines that there will be three obstacles. He rolls 8 (Despair), 1 (Reconnaissance), and 5 (Distant Item) on Table 4. The DM writes, "When the heroes arrive at Mount Bacchus, they find the hermit-vintners talking about the 'visitations of the dead' (the zombies) who have trampled and ruined their prized Grapes of Good Fellowship, leaving only sour Grapes of Wrath. If only a cutting from the vineyards of the Temple of Demeter several days travel away could be obtained! Alas, but the dead come upon those who are sent on that mission and terrorize them, preventing them from their journey. Soon the vintners will have no choice but to use the Grapes of Wrath, since their devotion to Bacchus requires them to make wine. The priestess's spies note the arrival of the PCs and report back to her.

Table 4: Obstacles

Roll 1d3+1 for number of obstacles.

1d10	Result
1	**Reconnaissance.** The villain deploys henchmen to spy upon the heroes.
2	**Pursuit.** The villain deploys henchmen to capture, ambush, or rob the heroes.
3	**Interdiction.** The heroes are forbidden to interfere by some authority.
4	**Shadow of the Past.** An old enemy or rival reappears to make trouble.
5	**Distant Item.** A helpful item is held at a distant location and must be obtained.
6	**Protected Item.** A helpful item is protected by traps and must be obtained.
7	**Guarded Item.** A helpful item is guarded by a monster and must be obtained.
8	**Despair.** The victim loses hope and wants to give in to the villain.
9	**Betrayal.** A seeming ally proves false, leading the heroes into a trap or ambush.
10	**Trickery.** An offer of help or seeming clue is actually a trap set by the villain.

Then she make plans to deal with them."

The DM then determines that there is one donation in this adventure. He rolls a 1 (Good Karma) on Table 5. He decides that the high priestess's zombies turn against her if they are fed with wine made from Grapes of Good Fellowship. A hermit-vintner gives the heroes a few bottles if they volunteer to make the journey to Demeter's Vineyard, telling them that legends say, "wine of good fellowship has the power to wake the dead." It is a small clue, but one that a clever PC will notice. The DM must decide which of

Table 5: Donations

Roll 1d3-1 for number of donations.

1d10	Result
1	**Good Karma.** The villain is vulnerable to an unusual attack possessed by or given to the heroes.
2	**It Says Here...** A manuscript contains a map to or description of a helpful item.
3	**Riddle Me This.** An oracle recounts a riddle whose solution leads to a helpful item.
4	**Well Met By Moonlight.** The heroes befriend a new ally with useful skills.
5	**Local Help.** A street urchin, clever peasant, or well-meaning servant offers aid.
6	**Gotcha!** The heroes surprise some of the villain's henchmen and can capture them after only token resistance. The prisoners can be interrogated for clues.
7	**Hi-yo, Silver.** The heroes befriend or tame an animal ally with useful abilities.
8	**Secret Passage.** The heroes learn of a secret entrance into the villain's stronghold.
9	**Seeing the Light.** A henchman of the villain turns against evil and helps the heroes.
10	**I'm Your Fairy Godmother.** A fairy or wizard gives a helpful item or helps obtain one.

the players' attempts to make the zombies imbibe the wine has the best chance of success, as well as what happens if they do succeed. Do the zombies shamble back toward the mausoleum, half-felt vengeance burning in their rotten hearts?

Step Four: Determine Rewards and Penalties

The DM should be prepared to reward the heroes for saving (or avenging) the victim and defeating the villain's plans. Often, the gratitude of the victim is satisfaction enough; experience points for good roleplaying and heroic deeds are also appreciated. On the other hand, sometimes the heroes fail or are only partially successful, and the DM should have some idea of the consequences of such failure.

Roll 1d10 once each on Table 6 and Table 7. Use the result to determine what might occur if the heroes succeed or fail. Sometimes a suitable reward or sufficient penalty will suggest itself without recourse to dice-rolling; in that case, simply note the possibilities. Specific game mechanics should be determined as necessary.

Example: The DM rolls a 2 (Knowledge) on Table 6 and an 8 (Curse) on Table 7. If the heroes succeed, he decides, the hermit-vintners give one of them the Blessing of Bacchus, giving him or her the ability to change water into wine, purifying it in the process, once a day. If they fail to use this ability every day, the god Bacchus' displeasure makes them lose money whenever they gamble or bargain for a period of one year. A quest of atonement might mitigate this effect.

Finishing Touches

At this point, the DM has generated a fairly complete adventure. After a few maps and character statistics are created, this short adventure is ready to play—but that's the easy part. Much can be cribbed from existing sourcebooks and published adventures. Minimally, statistics for the priestess, her zombies, and a half-dozen henchmen acolytes are needed; the hermit-vintners need only names and a few personality details. A sketch map of Mount Bacchus that includes vineyards, a few buildings, and a graveyard is necessary to begin playing, as is perhaps a little map of the priestess's mausoleum hideout. Depending upon how much time and energy the DM has available, he could even write out a few lines from the minstrels' play, and have the short-handed NPC playwright desperately recruit the PCs to perform.

When the PCs become involved, they have a number of possible courses of action, including hunting for the grape-trampling zombies, traveling to Demeter's Vineyard, and trying to persuade the hermit-vintners not to use the Grapes of Wrath just yet. The high priestess monitors their actions using her spies among the vintners, and she attempts various counteractions, including setting her zombies upon them and having her spies get them drunk on some Wrathful Wine that was made a few years ago.

Ultimately, the PCs must track down the priestess hidden in her crypt and confront her. She should be powerful enough to give the PCs a good fight. If the DM would like to use her as a recurring villain, she should have some

Table 6: Rewards

Roll once if the heroes succeed.

1d10	Result
1	**Promotion.** One or more of the heroes is ennobled or otherwise promoted.
2	**Knowledge.** The heroes learn something of potential value or use.
3	**Love.** A suitable individual falls in love with one of the heroes.
4	**A Token of Esteem.** The victim gives the heroes a small memento.
5	**Gratitude.** The victim becomes a potential ally for another adventure.
6	**Reward Money.** The heroes receive a small amount of treasure.
7	**Glory.** The reputation of the heroes increases, and they gain a measure of fame.
8	**Blessing.** The heroes are blessed with good luck for a period of time.
9	**The King's Favor.** A local ruler hears of the heroic deeds and is impressed.
10	**Fabulous Treasure.** The heroes receive a large reward from an unexpected source.

Table 7: Penalties

Roll once if the heroes fail.

1d10	Result
1	**Exile.** The heroes are ordered to leave and never return.
2	**A Falling Out.** A former ally turns against the heroes, becoming a rival or enemy.
3	**Ill Will.** A surviving victim or relative becomes a rival or enemy of the heroes.
4	**Shown Up.** Rivals of the heroes save the victim, are rewarded, and gloat.
5	**Enmity.** A surviving villain or henchman bears a grudge, becoming an enemy.
6	**Shame.** The heroes lose face and become the subject of malicious gossip.
7	**Loss.** The heroes have a valuable possession taken from them or destroyed.
8	**Curse.** The heroes are plagued by bad luck for a period of time.
9	**Outlaws!** The heroes are accused of a crime and are pursued by the authorities.
10	**Imprisonment.** The heroes are imprisoned by the villain or by the authorities.

means of escape and avoiding pursuit. Perhaps she has a ring that allows her to transform into a black cat and scurry away, a secret tunnel that collapses behind her, or a spell that delivers her to safety. Or perhaps a disappointed and angry Hecate appears and carries off the priestess to be punished and sent back on some new mission of destruction.

Options

DMs who use this random adventure generator should feel free to customize it or to vary the ways in which they use it. Some possibilities include:

- For any table, instead of 1d10, roll 2d6-2; re-roll results of "0." This makes the more extraordinary events less common, if the random adventure plot generator is used with any frequency.
- If duplicate rolls are made on any table, the DM can ignore the roll, treating it as no result; re-roll; or implement the result a second time. For example, the heroes might be joined by two allies if a "4" is rolled twice on the Donations table. The DM should of course feel free to re-roll at any time, or simply improvise.
- Replace one or more items in the villain or victim table with a specific NPC the players have encountered in the past or that the DM would like them to encounter. Replace items in Table 3 with events or persons specific to the campaign: "Sheelba of the Eyeless Face contacts the heroes," for example.

Gamemasters can modify this random adventure plot generator for genres other than fantasy, simply by altering the archetypes listed on the tables. A science-fiction adventure plot generator, for example, might list "peaceful colonists" or "a hard-luck asteroid miner" on Table 1, and "a ruthless megacorporate executive" or "an interstellar crimelord" on Table 2.

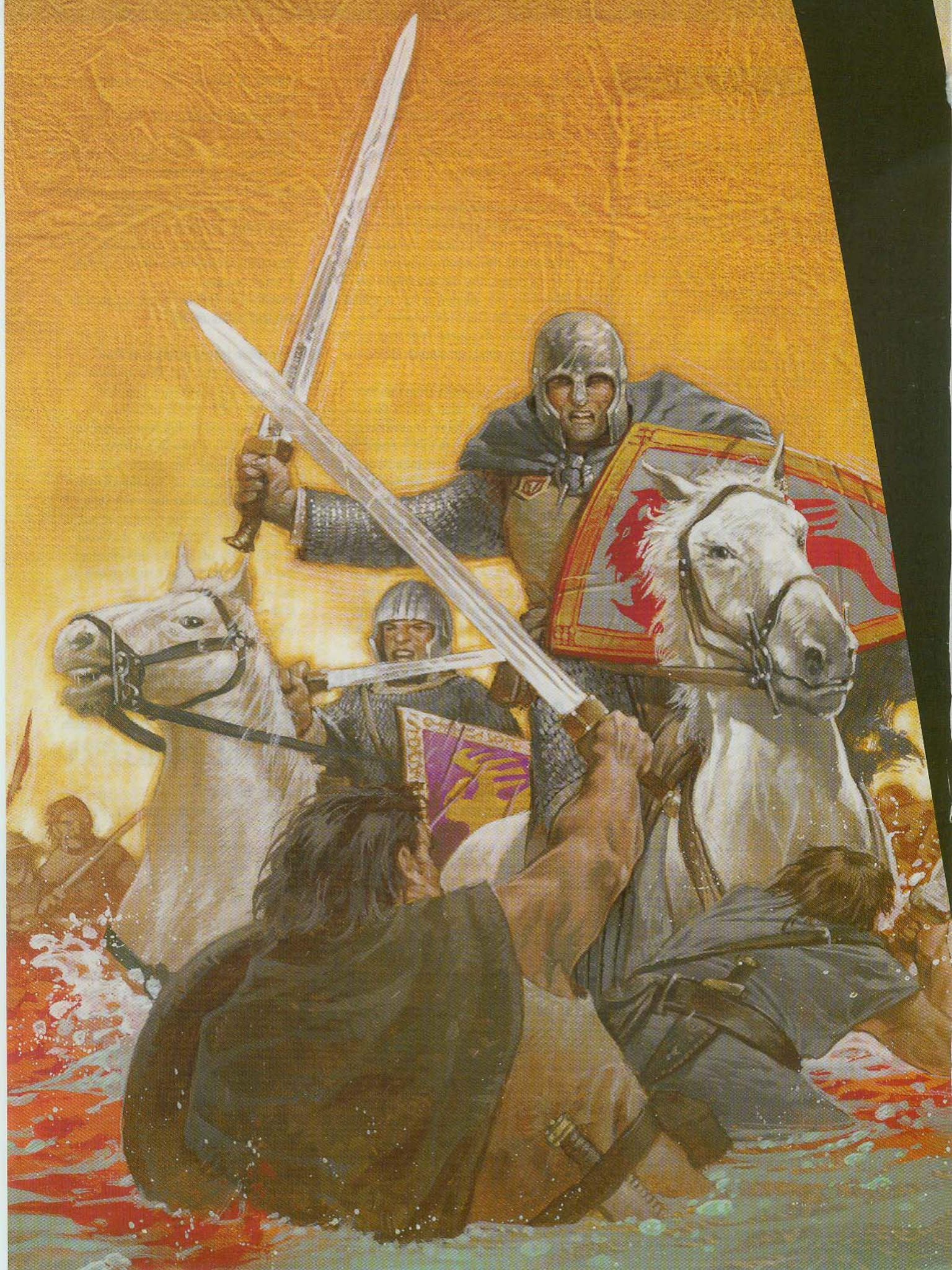
GAMEMASTERS CAN MODIFY THIS PLOT GENERATOR FOR OTHER GENRES, LIKE SCIENCE FICTION, BY ADJUSTING THE ARCHETYPES.

A Final Example

The results obtained from this random adventure plot generator are suggestions only; the DM should interpret the results, rather than feel constrained by them. Different elements can be combined or ignored to maintain the sense of the narrative that the rolls of the dice inspire. Here is another quick example of how the adventure plot generator can be used to create a basic adventure outline. The die rolls provide the following information:

Victim: A scrappy apprentice or squire.
Villain: A former ally or seeming friend.
Mediation: Magical creature/smart animal leads heroes to victim.
Obstacles (3): Villain deploys henchmen to attack heroes, a seeming donation is really a trap, and a false ally leads heroes into ambush.
Donations: Heroes learn of secret entrance to villain's stronghold.
Reward for success: Hero receives a small reward.
Penalty for failure: Rival saves victim and takes credit.

One possible interpretation is this: The wizard who has sent the heroes on many an adventure has just become a lich and imprisoned his apprentice within his tower, intending to sacrifice him in a vitality-restoring ritual. The apprentice manages to send his familiar to the heroes, hoping that they will follow it to the tower. As the familiar moves closer to the lich's tower, it comes increasingly under the influence of the lich. While it leads the heroes safely past the tower's gate guardians, it takes them up a stairway on the outside of the tower, where they are attacked by gargoyles. If the heroes survive, the familiar takes them to the lich, who disguises his undead status with an illusion and tries to get them to lower their guard so as to cast spells at them. If the heroes manage to free the apprentice, he takes command of the tower and rewards each of them with a minor magic item from the lich's stock, eventually becoming a kind and good wizard. But if the lich overcomes or befuddles the heroes, the apprentice manages to free himself and, using a *potion of undead control* he cleverly concocted, makes the lich his slave. The heroes are shown out of the tower, and the apprentice eventually becomes a powerful and cruel wizard himself.



To thwart the immortal Aten's plans to kill Arthur, Orian risks destroying the only person he loves.

POWER and GLORY

BY BEN BOVA

ILLUSTRATED by DAVE DORMAN

"MY GOD," BREATHED LANCELOT, "THEY LOOK LIKE ANGELS."

Sir Bors, mounted between Lancelot and Arthur, shifted uneasily in his saddle, making the leather creak. "Never seen angels bearing axes before, have you? Or spears."

"Or swords, either," said Arthur.

"They swarm like flies on a dung heap," Bors growled.

Lancelot laughed. "The more we kill, the more the bards will sing of us."

I was astride my horse just behind Arthur, ready to ride into battle with him even though I was a mere squire. Arthur's army was pitifully small compared to the host of Angles trudging toward us like a restless golden-haired tide advancing across the flat below. We were hardly a hundred knights with their squires and a few dozen footmen recruited grudgingly from nearby villages.

Arthur had maneuvered his mounted knights to the top of the ridge, pinning the barbarians between us and the bend of the river that glittered in the bright sunshine of this beautiful summer morning. The footmen, farm boys for the most part, stood uneasily behind us, already looking frightened. They would run off at the first sign of trouble, I thought.

"Those look like Roman swords, some of them," Arthur said, totally focused on the approaching warrior throng.

"They've looted this region quite thoroughly," Bors agreed.

We had seen the consequences of the barbarian invasion of this eastern shore of Britain: burnt-out homes, ravaged villages, fields given to the torch, crops ruined. Arthur had camped the night before in the crumbling remains of an old Roman villa. Once it had been the home of a prosperous British landowner, a lord whose family had followed Roman ways even after the legions had left Britain. Now it was abandoned, blackened by fire, gutted by barbarian pillagers, the family who once lived in it nothing but rotting bones that the "angels" had not even bothered to bury.

Ever since the Roman legions had abandoned Britain, the barbarian tribes had been invading the island: Saxons in the south, Angles and Jutes along the east coast, even

Scots from the far north had crossed the old wall of Hadrian to devastate the northern kingdoms.

Arthur dreamed of ridding the island of these invaders and returning the land to the peace and order it had known under the Romans. His uncle, canny old Ambrosius Aurelianus, self-styled High King of the Britons, had cleverly given Arthur the title of Dux Bellorum—battle chief—and sent him out to drive the barbarians into the sea. Scheming Merlin had convinced Ambrosius that the more Arthur succeeded, the more of the petty Celtic kingdoms would swear fealty to the High King. Ambrosius' dream was to be the true High King, ruler over all the scattered little domains that dotted Britain like a patchwork quilt.

"They're counting our numbers," muttered Bors.

Arthur leaned forward slightly to pat the neck of his steed. "Hardly any need for that," he said, his clear tenor voice firm, unafraid. "They can easily see that they outnumber us ten to one."

"What matter?" said Lancelot, impatiently. "The more there are of them, the more glory for us."

Arthur smiled at the young knight, so eager for action that he fairly radiated energy. Battle-scarred Bors shook his head in disapproval.

We all have our dreams. Young Lancelot dreamed of glory. Arthur of victory. Ambrosius of power. Me? My dream was to be reunited with Anya, the goddess whom I love, the eternally beautiful immortal from the far future who loves me.

For now, though, I was content merely to serve and protect Arthur, even though it might cost me my life. I have died many times and always been revived to be sent to another place in another age, another nexus in the spacetime continuum. I am an unwilling time traveler: Orion, the Hunter, created by Aten to do his bidding across the centuries and millennia. I have fought at Carthage and Cathay, I have died in the jaws of an Ice Age cave bear and in a nuclear holocaust, I have piloted war canoes and starships for Aten. I have committed murder and bloody slaughter at his whim.

"My helmet, Orion," Arthur commanded.

I nudged my horse to his side and handed him the plain steel helmet with the nose piece that projected down from the brows. I had seen much better helms at Philippi and even at Troy, more than a thousand years earlier. But Arthur disdained fancy plumed helmets and elaborate armor. No, that's not entirely right. He simply never thought about such things. Dux Bellorum he might be, and a natural leader of the volatile, independent-minded Celts. But there was not a shred of vanity in him. Not much out of his teens, scarcely older than glory-driven Lancelot, Arthur went into battle with nothing to distinguish him from the other knights except the bright red dragon emblazoned on his shield.

He slid the helmet over his sandy brown hair. All along the thin line of chainmail-clad horsemen, the other knights donned their helmets, adjusted the straps on their shields, took spears from their squires. Their steeds snuffled and pawed the ground nervously, sensing that bloodshed was near. Down the grassy slope, the horde of Angles were forming up into a battle line. I saw the golden-haired men hefting spears, staring grimly up at us.

"Fools! You face Arthur and his knights. Prepare your souls to meet their maker!"

One of the bare-chested warriors stepped out in front of the others, bearing a huge axe in one meaty fist and a thick-shafted spear in the other.

"Come on, you dung-eating cowards!" he shouted. "We will chop you to pieces and feast on your livers! I am Alan Axe-Wielder, son of Alan the Bold, grandson of mighty Hengist himself ..."

Lancelot asked, "Hengist was a Saxon, wasn't he? Not an Angle."

Smiling from under his steel helmet, Arthur said gently, "They all claim to be descended from Hengist."

"With a bit of luck," muttered Sir Bors, "the Axe-Wielder will be sitting in hell with old Hengist before the sun goes down."

The barbarian leader ranted for a long time, working himself and his men into battle fury, boasting of their victories and invincibility, demeaning the prowess and even the masculinity of the Celtic knights.

When at last he drew a long breath, Bors bellowed, "Fools! You face Arthur and his knights, not some poor unarmed farmers and defenseless women. Prepare your souls to meet their maker!"

With that, Arthur lifted his spear in his right arm and sang out a single word: "Charge!"

A hundred spears snapped down to point straight at the enemy. A hundred powerful steeds sprang into the gallop, with me and the rest of the squires close behind. Down the grassy slope we thundered like a spearhead of steel hurtling toward the vast surging sea of waiting barbarians.

Small though our numbers, we had an advantage the barbarians did not suspect. I had "invented" stirrups and spurs for Arthur, so that he and his knights could charge into battle at full tilt and smash into the enemy without slowing down. Before stirrups, cavalry had been forced to ride more slowly into battle, easily pulled down by determined men on foot. Even in Alexander's time, the elite Macedonian cavalry had always held back until the enemy line had been broken by the charge of the heavy infantry. Only when the enemy was shattered and in retreat could the cavalry ride in and begin the slaughter of the fleeing foot soldiers.

Arthur had won a smashing victory over the Saxons besieging Amesbury fort, using the new tactics of flat-out charges. With stirrups, a mounted knight could strike with all the power of his charging horse concentrated into the point of his spear. The Saxons had been stunned and routed at Amesbury. Even old Aelle, their leader, had fled in panic from Arthur's attack.

These Angles were brave men. As we hurtled downslope toward them they gave ground slowly, instinctively backing away from our onrushing horses. But only a few grudging steps. Then they raised their weapons and stood their ground,

waiting until we surged into their midst so they could surround us, swarm over us, bring down horse and rider and hack us to pieces.

It was not to be.

Leaning close to his horse's mane, his weight on his stirrups, his spear pointed straight at the boastful Alan Axe-Wielder, Arthur led the charge into the host of Angles. I raced behind him, sword in hand, to protect his back. As always when I go into battle, the world seemed to shift into slow motion, time itself stretched so that everything around me appeared to move in sluggish, dreamlike lethargy. I saw the horses pounding down the grassy slope as if they were drifting through a soup of thick, clear molasses, clods of earth thrown up by their hooves floating languorously through the air.

The charging knights took on a wedge-shaped formation, Arthur at its apex, Lancelot and Bors at his sides. They struck the barbarians at full gallop. Arthur's spear took the Axe-Wielder full in the chest, shattering his shield, lifting him completely off his feet. He looked terribly surprised as his ribcage smashed in and his life's blood spurted out of him.

Wrenching his spear free without slowing down a fraction, Arthur drove his steed through the shocked barbarian line, bowling over warriors too slow to get out of his way. Following close behind him, I hacked left and right at any man foolhardy enough to try to get at Arthur from behind.

The knights had blasted right through the heart of the barbarian formation. Where the Axe-Wielder and his best men had stood a moment ago, there was now no man standing, nothing but shattered bodies littering the blood-soaked grass. The two wings of the barbarian host stood in shocked disbelief, separated, stunned, too amazed to either charge or run away.

Arthur wheeled his mounted knights to the left, and we charged into that crowd of milling, dazed warriors. In truth, they seemed petrified, disorganized, the heart torn out of them.

Yet they stood and fought, though little good it did them. The knights smashed into them, a hurtling wave of steel dealing death with spear and sword. Before the stunned, disheartened warriors on the other side of the field could make up their minds to rush at the mounted knights, their brethren were smashed, disemboweled, scattered like dandelion seeds in a gale. Those that still could, ran, dropping shields and spears and racing away as fast as their legs could carry them, splashing into the river, tripping, falling, floundering in the cold water, mad to escape onrushing death.

Lancelot drove after them, his sword licking the lives from the fleeing warriors. No, they were no longer warriors; they were terrified men trying to run away, desperate to save their lives.

With a sudden roar, our footmen came running down the ridge, armed with swords, sickles, clubs, knives. The river began to run red as they hurled themselves, howling, on the men who had looted their homes, killing and raping and burning.

"Come back!" Arthur shouted after Lancelot. "Regroup!"

But Lancelot was already chasing down the hapless barbarians, his steed splashing into the river alongside the vengeance-maddened footmen. Arthur wheeled his knights around to face the remaining barbarian warriors who were starting a ragged charge of their own toward us.

"Get back here!" bellowed Sir Bors, in a voice that could be heard across eternity.

Lancelot reined in his horse, turned around and cantered back toward Arthur. His squire trotted to him and handed him a fresh spear. The belly of Lancelot's horse was red with barbarian blood; the knight's legs were spattered with blood up to his thighs. Even the golden eagle emblem on his shield was barely visible, covered with blood and dripping mud.

Once Arthur got his formation turned to face the remainder of the once-boastful Angles, the onrushing warriors slowed and then stopped altogether. From my vantage point slightly behind Arthur I could see the consternation and fear on their faces. For a long moment they simply stood there, mouths open in shocked disbelief, eyes staring wildly. Arthur and his knights sat on their snorting, blowing mounts. Neither side moved, except for a few of the barbarians in the rear of their undisciplined mass, who slowly, silently backed away and then began to slink toward the river and the thick woods beyond.

Lancelot trotted up and, without stopping, spurred his horse into a charge.

"Wait!" shouted Arthur. But Lancelot was already galloping at the barbarians.

In truth, their host was no longer an army, it was a cowed, beaten mob. They were melting away; one by one at first, then by the twos and threes, by the fives and tens, they fled for their lives as Lancelot charged at them, alone. Yet there were still dozens of armed warriors standing their ground, many scores of men who were not running away.

"Damned fool!" Bors groused. "One man alone, they'll swarm all over him."

Arthur looked grim, watching Lancelot's solitary charge. The other knights seemed just as stunned as the barbarians; they all turned to Arthur for his command. Drawing Excalibur from its sheath he shouted, "Charge!" once more.

Again we thundered into action. Seeing us all galloping after Lancelot, the remaining barbarians lost what was left of their nerve. They bolted and ran, scattering everywhere like mice trying to flee a hungry cat. Little good it did them. We caught them at the river's edge and slaughtered them. Blood and bones and severed arms, heads, bodies split from shoulder to crotch littered the grass and turned the river into a charnel stream.

At last Arthur shouted, "Enough! Enough!"

Lancelot was in the river, up to his horse's belly, hacking away at any man left standing. Arthur had to splash in alongside him and grip his sword arm.

"I said enough," Arthur repeated.

For a long moment Lancelot simply stared at his commander. Then he sheathed his reddened sword and swept off his helmet. He was grinning, white teeth showing, eyes a-sparkle.

There were no barbarians left standing. The few who had escaped were fleeing into the woods on the other side of the river. Our footmen, ferocious in victory, were merrily slitting the throats of the wounded and picking their carcasses clean of weapons, helmets, boots, even their leather trousers.

"The crows will feast till they burst," said Bors, surveying the bloody scene.

"A great victory!" Lancelot shouted as he and Arthur rode side-by-side out of the river. "A wonderful

victory! The barbarians will run all the way back to their own country, over the sea!"

Arthur was more thoughtful. "You mustn't go dashing off on your own. You could have been killed."

"But I wasn't!"

Bors interjected, "Only because we came up behind you, lad. You've got to keep your head in battle—or lose it."

Lancelot laughed and trotted away.

"He's going to be trouble," Bors said to Arthur.

Without taking his eyes from Lancelot's retreating back, Arthur said softly, "He's young. He'll learn better."

"Or he won't get much older," groused Sir Bors.

THAT NIGHT WE CAMPED in a clearing in the forest across the river, upwind from the battlefield. Arthur sent a dozen mounted scouts to find where the remnants of the barbarian army had fled. "Their main camps are close by the coast," he told us, over the dying embers of the campfire. "Their warriors must have headed that way."

"Probably along the old Roman road," said Gawain. "It's the straightest route to the coast." Gawain was one of the few knights who'd been wounded in the fight. His thigh had been sliced slightly by a spear. Laughingly, he claimed he'd taken the spear thrust to protect his horse.

Lancelot was still glowing with excitement. "Right now, the few barbarian survivors are probably telling their fellows how we crushed them. By tomorrow they'll be climbing into their boats and leaving Britain forever."

Arthur smiled tiredly at the young knight. "I wish it would be so," he said.

It was not.

I stretched out on my blanket, close to Arthur, my sword at my side, and closed my eyes to sleep.

Instead, I found myself standing on a windswept hilltop bathed in the cold silver glow of a gibbous moon.

Anya, I thought, my pulse racing. She's come to meet me here.

"Not your precious Anya," said the haughty voice I knew only too well. I turned and saw Aten stepping out of the shadows of the sighing, wind-tossed trees.

He styles himself the Golden One and, truly, he is magnificent to look upon. Even in this moonlit night he radiated light and strength. Golden hair, tawny eyes, the body of a Greek god, Aten was dressed in a military uniform of purest white, with gold epaulets and trim.

"You continue in your pitiful efforts to thwart me, Orion," he said, a contemptuous smile on his lips that was half a sneer.

"I protect Arthur as best I can," I replied.

With a condescending shake of his head, Aten went on, "How little you understand the forces you are dealing with. But then, how could you understand? I did not build such knowledge into you."

"Teach me, then. You claim to be my creator: Educate your creature."

He laughed in my face. "Teach you? Can a mule be taught space-time mechanics? Can a flatworm learn how to manipulate the continuum?"

I said nothing. I longed to smash in his smug, gloating face, but I was powerless to move against him.

"The game grows more interesting, Orion, but it can end in only one way. Arthur and his Celts must be defeated by the invaders. That is what must be."

"Because you want it that way."

"Yes! That is my desire. I will not allow you or anyone else to stand against me."

"Others of the Creators do not agree with you," I pointed out.

"That is none of your affair," he snapped.

"Anya is against you."

He bristled. "Anya is far from here, Orion, devoting her misguided energies to another aspect of the continuum, another nexus that must be resolved properly."

"Another part of your game."

"It is hardly a game," Aten said sharply. "Because of you and your oafish stubbornness, this nexus here in Britain is in danger of unravelling. If it does, the entire continuum will be shaken, whole worldlines will crumble—"

"And you will lose your power," I interrupted. One glance at his face, though, told me what he would not say.

"You will lose your existence!" I realized.

"So will Anya," he answered. "So will all we Creators be banished from existence. The Earth, the human race, everything will disappear totally and forever, wiped clean from the continuum as if we never existed in the first place."

I stared at him. Then I heard myself say, "I don't believe you."

"Believe, Orion," Aten replied, totally serious. "You claim to love Anya. If you continue to protect Arthur you will be killing her, just as if you drove your dagger through her heart."

He laughed bitterly. "No arguments, Orion. No matter what you do, it hardly matters. I have another assassin ready to kill Arthur, and the jest is that he hasn't the faintest inkling that he is an assassin."

"What do you mean?"

But Aten was no longer there. He winked out, like a light suddenly turned off. Like a hologram projection, I thought. Yet his sardonic laughter echoed in my mind.

Could it be true? By protecting Arthur, was I destroying Anya, the only person I loved, the only member of the Creators who showed the slightest concern for the human race?

And someone else was going to murder Arthur? Someone who doesn't even know that he will kill the Dux Bellorum?

I paced slowly along the crest of the hill as the moon edged lower in the night sky, trying to sort it all out, trying to decide what was true, what my course of action should be. At one point, Aten had seemed almost to be pleading with me. Was he lying? Was he trying to manipulate me, using my love for Anya as a way of controlling me?

The Creators had godlike powers, but they were actually humans from the distant future, humans who had learned to wield the forces of spacetime to travel at will across the continuum. They had interfered in human affairs all through history and even earlier, always trying to bend the worldlines to suit their whims. Aten had created me and others, he claimed, to do his bidding at placetimes where the continuum comes to a focal point, a nexus that would determine the worldlines for eons to come.

Like spoiled children, the Creators often bickered among themselves. Their disagreements brought wars and disasters to humankind, their disputes were settled by our blood.

It was a cosmic irony. These so-called Creators were the descendants of ordinary humans such as Arthur and the men and women of this age. We had created them, in truth. They are our distant progeny. Yet they reached back through time

to try to control us.

For hours I walked along that grassy hilltop as the wind from the sea tossed the leafy boughs of the trees and set them to groaning plaintively. The moon went down and I could see the spangled glory of the heavens, stars glittering like jewels, the Great Bear and its smaller brother, the Chained Princess and Perseus the Hero, and the majestic stream of the Milky Way. Orion was not in sight, though. And Anya was far away, beyond my reach—perhaps forever.

Then different lights caught my eye. Down on the seashore below the hill, fires were burning. Campfires. This was one of the places where the barbarians had built a settlement for themselves. I could see their boats pulled up on the beach, black against the starlit sand. Huts and larger buildings thatched with straw dotted the shore. The barbarians had built a village for themselves, a town for their families and flocks. There were even fields of food crops within easy walking distance of the huts.

"We'll crush them like eggshells. The bards will sing of Arthur and his knights for a thousand years."

The barbarians were not piling into the boats, as Lancelot had predicted. They were nowhere near the boats. They had built this village to live in permanently, and they had no intention of leaving. As I peered down at the starlit scene below me, I saw that they were digging a huge ditch across the old Roman road that led to their settlement.

They were preparing to fight.

I WOKE WITH A START, back at Arthur's camp. The first hazy gray hint of dawn was beginning to lighten the eastern sky. Venus hung in the west like a gleaming diamond.

What I had seen during the night had been no dream, I knew. Aten had transported me to the coastal base of the Angles. Why, I did not understand. But it was clear to me that the barbarians had no intention of fleeing Britain. They were digging in, preparing to fight against Arthur's advancing army.

After I had eaten with the other squires, I sought out Arthur. He was sitting under a massive oak tree, alone, looking lost in thought.

"May I speak to you, sire?" I asked.

Arthur smiled boyishly at me and patted the mossy ground. "Sit here, Orion, and don't be so formal. We are all companions here."

"It's about the enemy," I said, sitting beside him.

"The scouts all report that they are fleeing along the Roman road toward the coast."

"True enough," I agreed. "The few survivors from yesterday's battle are retreating. But their brethren are digging defensive works along that road."

"Digging?"

"Trenches and earthworks. To stop you."

He looked puzzled. "How do you know this?"

"I saw it last night."

His perplexed frown deepened. "But you were here in camp with us last night."

I thought quickly. "The Lady of the Lake showed it to me." It wasn't much of a lie. Anya had appeared to us both in the past; under the guise of the Lady of the Lake she had given Arthur his sword Excalibur.

"She was here?" Arthur gasped. "In this camp?" He looked all around at the forest surrounding our clearing. Even though it was full morning, the woods were deep and shadowy, thick with brush, dark and mysterious enough to imagine all kinds of spirits and supernatural beings lurking nearby, enchantments and wizards and magic spells.

"She took me to the Angles settlement on the coast," I said, trying to skirt my half-truth.

"You saw them digging trenches," Arthur said, sounding dismayed.

"Yes," I answered. "They were not loading their boats and preparing to leave."

He smiled grimly. "Lancelot will be disappointed."

"I imagine so."

"On the other hand, Lancelot will probably be glad for another chance for glory." His smile faded completely.

LANCELOT WAS DELIGHTED that his prediction had failed to come true. All during our march along the old Roman road he chattered happily about the coming battle.

"We'll crush them like eggshells," he said. "The bards will sing of Arthur and his knights for a thousand years."

He was right about the fame that he and Arthur would win. Poets chronicled the deeds of Arthur and his knights for much more than a mere thousand years, I knew, although the heart of their romances dealt with Lancelot's falling in love with Arthur's queen. As we rode along toward the next battle, though, I began to realize that if Aten had his way Arthur would soon be killed and his story snuffed out. No bard would sing of the deeds of a young Dux Bellorum killed in battle before he was old enough to grow a full beard. Arthur would be forgotten, his bones and his legend decayed into dust.

Worse yet, Arthur might be assassinated, murdered by one of his own people. Would Lancelot be Aten's killer? Certainly I would not. What about crafty old Merlin, still back at Cadbury castle with Ambrosius? The High King had agreed to keep the Saxons along Britain's southern shores in check while Arthur flung his knights against the Angles and Jutes in the east. Might Ambrosius allow old Aelle to bring his Saxon host up behind us, surrounding Arthur's knights between his Saxons and the Angles and Jutes?

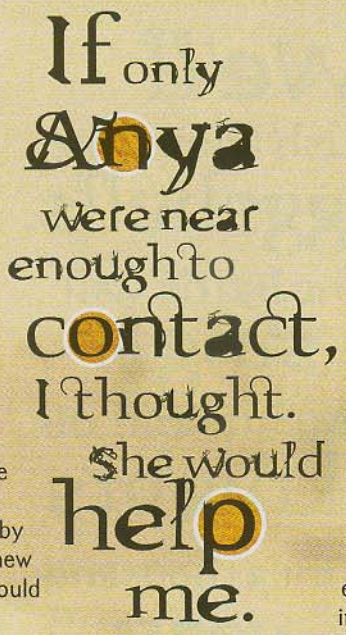
No, I thought, Ambrosius wanted Arthur to succeed. Arthur was now the right arm of the High King; it would be criminally stupid for Ambrosius to work against Arthur.

And yet ... the thought nagged at me. Merlin was more than a wizened old faker, I was sure. There was an intelligence and purpose in those shaggy-browed eyes of his. I wondered if he might be one of the Creators in disguise. Not Aten, of course. But one of the others, come to this placetime to manipulate this

nexus in the continuum.

My mind swirled with the possibilities as we rode along the paving stones of the old Roman road. Straight as a ramrod it ran, through forest thick with huge oaks and yews and elms. To these uneducated Britons the straight paved roads and solid stone buildings of the Romans seemed like the works of gods. They did not know how to accomplish such engineering feats so they assumed the structures were beyond human capabilities. What foolishness, I thought. The Creators played on that credulity, just as I hoaxed Arthur into believing the Lady of the Lake had transported me to the Angles settlement in the night.

The Creators enjoyed being worshiped by their primitive ancestors. If these humans knew what their so-called gods really were, it would make them sick with disgust and shame.



The thick woods on either side of the road made excellent cover for an ambush, I thought. Yet Arthur led his knights along the road without a worry. They rode two or three abreast, each knight dutifully followed by his squire, the whole procession plodding slowly along the paving stones. Our baggage train and footmen followed in the rear.

We had gained dozens more footmen. Those who had been with us in yesterday's battle now carried swords stripped from the barbarian dead. Some wore helmets and almost all of them had boots or some sort of footgear, probably for the first time in their lives. News of our victory had almost doubled their number. Most of them were Christians, although a few still clung to the older Celtic religion. Christian or not, they talked among themselves of slaughtering the enemy, dreaming of looting the barbarians and raping their women just as the barbarians had done to them.

We trailed along the road all through the long, hot day. The lofty trees shaded us most of the time. I kept peering into the underbrush, worried about ambush. Dimly I remembered another life in a distant jungle where every bend in the trail was a danger. I tried to laugh my worries away. At least the enemy didn't have land mines and explosive booby traps in this age.

MIDWAY THROUGH THE second day we were halted by an entrenchment. The barbarians had torn up the road and dug a six-foot-deep ditch across it. Beyond the ditch was an earthen mound about six feet high, studded with spear heads. It reminded me of the trench and earthwork rampart that Agamemnon and the Achaians had thrown up to protect their camp on the shore of Troy. These barbarians had no better military craft than the Greeks and Trojans of some two millennia earlier.

Arthur brought our column to a halt and summoned me with a beckoning hand.

"You said their trench was nearby their settlement on the coast," he muttered.

Nodding, I replied, "They were building one there in great haste, sire. This must be another." His youthful face knotted into a frown. "No telling how many such fortifications they've built along the road."

Gawain, at Arthur's other side, suggested, "We could send scouts through the woods to spy out how many of these ditches they've dug."

"That would take days," Arthur said. "We'd have to camp here and do nothing while they could slip through the forest and surround us."

"Let them attack us," Gawain replied. "It will be easier to kill them in the open than to try to charge against that ditch and wall."

Bors pushed his horse between Arthur and me. "There's forage enough here for the mounts. We can wait a day or two. Give the steeds a needed rest."

Lancelot joined the conference, his face eager. But he was too young to speak his mind in the presence of veterans such as Bors and Gawain. Yet it was clear that he was bursting to join the conference.

"I don't like to wait," Arthur said. "Every day we sit idle is a day that the barbarians can use to strengthen their defenses."

"Then let's charge them!" Lancelot blurted. "One strong charge and we'll be over their earthen mound before they know what hit them!"

Bors shook his head. "The horses can't jump that ditch. And they won't charge those spearpoints. They've got too much sense for that."

"Then charge them on foot," Lancelot said, without an instant's hesitation.

Bors gave him a withering stare. "The horses are smarter than you are, lad."

Lancelot was totally unfazed. Turning to Arthur, he said, "I will lead a foot charge, my lord, if you will permit it."

"No," Arthur replied immediately. Then he added, "Not yet."

He spent the rest of the day studying the earthwork. We saw barbarian warriors poking their helmeted heads up above the rampart now and then. Once in a while they called to us, taunting us to charge against them. At one point, when Arthur rode slowly along the edge of the trench, a bowman popped up from behind the rampart and fired an arrow at him. I was afoot behind Arthur's horse, holding a brace of spears for him. My senses instantly went into overdrive. I saw the arrow gliding lazily toward Arthur, flexing slightly as it flew. Hefting one of the spears, I threw it at the arrow, grazing it just enough to deflect it away from Arthur.

It thudded into the ground at the horse's feet, making the mount rear and whinny in alarm. Arthur held his seat, barely. I imagine if he didn't have stirrups he would have been thrown. The bowman was still standing atop the parapet, knocking another arrow. I threw the other spear at him with all the force I could muster. As he looked up it caught him in the face. He screamed hideously and disappeared behind the earthwork.

Arthur had his steed under control by then. He stared at me, wide-eyed, but said nothing. I trotted to the first spear and picked it up, then followed him back to our camp, safely out of bow range from the barbarian entrenchment.

As the sun dipped westward, throwing long shadows

through the forest, Arthur called his most senior knights together at his cookfire. Footmen had scouted through the woods on either side of the road. Their reports were not encouraging. There were hundreds of Angles behind the entrenchment and more coming up the road from the coast.

"We could go around it," Arthur suggested, "through the forest, and attack them from the flanks."

Sir Bors pointed out, "Those woods are too thick for the horses. We'd have to attack them on foot."

"Their numbers would overwhelm us," said Sir Kay, gloomily.

"That young hothead Lancelot wants to charge them straight-on," Bors complained.

"On foot?" Kay looked aghast.

Around and around the discussion went, while the sun set and a deep moonless dark fell over the woods. I heard an owl hoot, and a moaning wind began tossing the leafy branches of the trees. It was easy to understand how these people could believe deep forests such as this to be haunted.

The conference broke up with nothing decided. Arthur walked slowly away from the campfire. I followed him at a respectful distance.

"Orion," he called to me without turning around.

I came up to his side.

"I must decide, Orion. We must find a way to beat these barbarians. My mission is to drive them out of Britain. We can't retreat and leave them here unharmed."

"Then we must fight them," I said.

"On foot? They'll slaughter us."

We were standing in the middle of the paved road, looking up toward the enemy's position. They had lit big bonfires on either end of their earthwork, so sneaking across the ditch and up the rampart for a surprise attack was out of the question.

"Let me scout their position," I suggested. "Perhaps I can find a weakness that the footmen overlooked."

Bleakly, he nodded. Then he murmured, "I wish Merlin were here. He'd know what to do."

Perhaps, I thought. Or perhaps Merlin would lead you to your death. I slipped into the woods, armed with nothing but a sword and the dagger that Odysseos had given me at Troy, strapped to my thigh. The underbrush was thick, the going slow and difficult. It would be impossible to sneak up on the barbarians in silence.

Unless ... I crouched in the deepest shadows of the bushes and squeezed my eyes shut, willing myself to another vantage point. If Aten and his so-called Creators can move across space and time at their whim, why can't I?

It was useless. No matter how I strained, no matter how hard I concentrated, I did not budge from my spot in the underbrush. If only Anya were near enough to contact, I thought. She could help me.

"I will help you, my darling," her silvery voice whispered.

"Anya!"

"I am far away, far distant in time and space," she told me, her voice so faint I wondered if I were imagining it. "I cannot maintain contact for very long, beloved."

Just to hear her voice was more joy than I had known in ages.

"Close your eyes, Orion," she commanded gently. "Close your eyes and see."

I pressed my eyes shut once again. Suddenly I was high above the forest, looking down as a hawk would, as an eagle soaring among the clouds. I saw the thin straight line of the Roman road, the barbarians' ditch with Arthur's camp on one side of it and the enemy's on the other. Higher and higher I rose. There were three more trenches dug across the road, with several miles distance between each one. The final trench was just before the Angles' village on the coast.

Barbarians they might be, but they understood the value of a defense in depth. Arthur and his knights might fight their way past one of those barriers, perhaps even two of them. But at what cost? How many knights would Arthur have left after two such assaults? How many footmen would remain loyal to him after such bloodlettings?

I opened my eyes and was back in the underbrush.

"Anya, what can I do?" I asked, hardly voicing the words.

There was no answer. Anya was gone. She had given me all the help she could; now the contact between us was broken. Instead I heard in my mind the scornful laughter of Aten, telling me without words that Arthur's quest to drive the barbarians out of Britain was doomed to dismal failure.

BUT ARTHUR DID NOT think so. He listened grimly as I described the series of fortifications that the barbarians had dug along the road leading to the Angles' coastal base. When he asked how I could have seen so much in a single night, I told him that the Lady of the Lake showed it to me. That was not far from the truth.

The two of us walked alone through the deep woods that morning. The rest of Arthur's army lolled in camp, content to rest for the day. The Angles were not resting, though; they were digging, deepening their entrenchments, strengthening their defenses.

After my report Arthur walked slowly through the woods for what seemed like hours, silent, thinking, weighing the possibilities. It was cool in the deep shadows of the forest. The trees formed an almost continuous green canopy high above us, making it difficult to tell how far the sun had moved. The underbrush was so thick that we had to walk slowly. Horsemen could never charge through here.

At length, Arthur asked me, "Where are their fighting men, Orion?"

I blinked, trying to remember what I had seen. "There were many more campfires at this first barrier than at any of the others—except for the last one, near their village."

He nodded. "Most of their fighting men are here, then, ready to face us. If we break through their defenses, they will fall back along the road to the next barrier."

"That makes sense. The other trenches are held only weakly at present. The people digging near their village must be old men, boys, perhaps even women."

"Their defenses are of no use if they have no warriors to man them," Arthur said.

I looked at his youthful face with new respect. He understood the fundamental truth of war: Destroy the enemy's army.

"It will be a costly battle, my lord," I warned. "It could be a Pyrrhic victory."

His brows rose questioningly.

"Pyrrhus was a Greek king who fought the Roman republic in southern Italy. He won many battles, but

always his own casualties were enormous. Once, when an aide congratulated him on beating the Romans again, he said, 'Another victory like this one and I'll have no army left.'"

Arthur smiled. "Yes, I see. Still, it must be done."

I agreed. "If we must attack them, then it must be in a manner that prevents them from retreating to their next fortification."

"That's the problem. How can we accomplish that?"

I remembered another battle, at a place called Cannae. I had served the doomed Hannibal in that era.

IT TOOK THE rest of the day to get the knights to agree to the plan that Arthur and I had hatched.

Bors was dead-set against the plan, of course. "Divide your forces? Depend on the footmen? It's insane!"

Gawain was doubtful. "How can we get through those woods? They're impassable."

Patiently, Arthur said, "You walk your horse through the underbrush. It can be done."

"Walk?" Gawain looked shocked. "I'm a knight, not a footman."

Arthur laughed. "You'll fight on horseback, never fear."

Once again I marvelled that these impulsive, individualistic Celtic knights could agree on anything. Dux Bellorum was Arthur's title, but it meant nothing by itself. None of the knights felt the slightest compulsion to accept authority or follow orders that he did not like. Arthur had to win them over to his view; he could not command them, he had to persuade them. Even the footmen could melt away, leave the army and trudge on back to their farmsteads or villages whenever they decided to.

Lancelot was the only one who agreed without argument. He was avid for battle.

"Let me be in the forefront of the attack!" he pleaded. "On foot or a-horse, I'll make those barbarians feel the sharpness of my sword!"

In truth, it was Lancelot who won Arthur's argument for him. He was so eager, so willing to plunge into battle, that he shamed Gawain and the older men into a sullen agreement.

It was late in the day by the time all the knights, one by one, gave the grudging nod to Arthur's plan.

"Very well, then," said Arthur at last. "We spend this night preparing for an attack at dawn."

One by one, he clasped each of them by the shoulders, knowing that they might never see each other again. The last one he embraced was young Lancelot.

"Please let me lead the frontal assault," Lancelot begged.

"That's the most dangerous job," Arthur said gently. "There's a very good chance that you'll be killed."

"But it brings the most glory! What does it matter if I'm killed? My deeds will live forever!"

Achilles had felt that way, I remembered. Until an arrow crippled him.

Arthur looked the youth in the eye. "Leading the frontal assault is my task, my responsibility."

Before the crestfallen Lancelot could reply, he added, "But you can be at my right hand, my friend."

I thought Lancelot would explode with joy.

ALL THAT NIGHT the men deployed, most of the knights and all of the footmen moving off into the dark forest as quietly as they could. We had no priest with us, but I saw plenty of the men kneeling and praying silently before they set off. Many of the knights held their broadswords before them as they prayed, the sword's hilt serving as a makeshift cross for them. A strange symbol for the Prince of Peace, I thought. But these were savage times, and these men were fighting for their homes and families.

So are the barbarians, said a voice in my mind. They have made their homes here in Britain.

I tried to get some sleep as I stretched out on the mossy ground near the dying embers of a campfire. Much of Arthur's plan—my plan, really—depended on the knights and footmen being in their proper places when the sun came up. Would they be in place?

An owl hooted somewhere in the woods. The totem of Athena, I recalled from another life, although in many cultures the owl was a symbol of death. The night was still, hardly a breeze. An animal snarled out there in the darkness. Fireflies danced to and fro in the underbrush. Even though I knew better, I almost thought the woods to be haunted, the habitat of elves and fairies and darker, more dangerous spirits.

I drifted off to sleep, only to find myself suspended in a featureless golden glow, floating as if in a weightless limbo.

"The end is near for Arthur," said Aten's haughty voice. I turned, spun around weightlessly, but could see nothing except the glowing golden radiance that surrounded me.

"Show yourself," I said.

"Giving commands to your Creator?" He laughed. "Really, Orion, I ought to let you die with Arthur."

"Neither of us will die," I said.

"Arthur will. And once he does, your usefulness in this placetime comes to an end."

"I won't murder him for you."

Aten's golden form took shape out of the glowing mist. Now he wore a form-fitting uniform of golden mesh.

"You won't have to assassinate Arthur," said Aten. "Young Lancelot will do your job for you."

"Lancelot?" I couldn't believe it. "He'd never kill Arthur. He adores the ground Arthur walks on."

"Yes, of course he does. And to show how much he adores Arthur he will be more daring than any knight. He will charge against the barbarians' spears, all courage and no fear. And Arthur will have to rush in beside him, won't he? Arthur would never stand back and watch the young hothead get himself killed in his foolish recklessness."

I saw it in my mind's eye: Lancelot charging blindly, Arthur rushing in to protect him, the barbarians swarming around them. "Not while I live," I muttered. "As long as I have breath in me, I will protect Arthur."

Aten smirked. "Then you'll have to die, too."

I wanted to reach out and throttle him, but before I could lift a finger I found myself back in Arthur's camp in the gray misty light of early dawn. Already I could hear the woodsmen's axes chunking into thick-boled trees.

THE TREE TRUNKS were rough and heavy. There was no time to split them or smooth them off. The barbarians must have heard the trees being felled and were wondering what we were up to; it was far too much chopping to be simply for firewood.

Arthur had kept only two dozen knights for this frontal assault on the entrenchment. The others were sifting through the woods, hoping to cut off the enemy's retreat.

If the enemy retreated. A dozen knights plus their squires and a few teenaged footmen was hardly an overwhelming force to pit against the entrenched Angles.

I was gripping one side of a massive tree trunk as we lugged it straight up the road toward the ditch and embankment behind it. I could see barbarian warriors watching us, their horned helmets bobbing up and down behind their earthwork. They must be laughing, I thought, as I sweated with the heavy load. It was too heavy for us to run with it. We trudged up the road, our arms feeling as if they would be pulled out of their sockets by the weight of the trunk.

The knights walked beside us, protecting us a little with their shields. No one said a word. Not even the birds or animals of the woods made a sound. All I could hear was the steady labored trudging of our boots and an occasional grunt from one of the squires toting the tree trunk.

"Come on!" shouted a golden-haired warrior, climbing to the top of the embankment. He waved to us. "Come on to your certain deaths! We welcome you."

Arthur, walking beside me, drew Excalibur from its sheath with a silvery hiss. On the other side of the trunk Lancelot pulled his sword, and behind me I heard the other knights drawing theirs.

We were within arrow range of the trench. Barbarian bowmen began pelting us. My senses went into overdrive and I could see the arrows soaring lazily toward us. One thunked into the trunk inches from me. Arthur extended his shield to cover me, exposing himself to their fire.

Is this how he will die? I asked myself, trying to protect me? How Aten will laugh if it happens that way.

Now they were throwing spears. I saw everything in slow-motion, but although I could easily see arrows and spears coming my way, I could not dodge them. Not unless I dropped the tree trunk. Arthur caught an arrow on his shield. A spear hit the ground at his feet and clattered off the Roman paving stones.

We were within a few paces of the ditch's edge. I heard a man scream with sudden pain, and the trunk nearly twisted out of my grip.

"Now!" Arthur bellowed.

With every atom of strength in me, I ran down into the ditch, lugging the trunk with me. The other squires followed my lead, although two more of them went down with arrows through their bodies.

We rammed the tree trunk against the embankment. Most of the squires ducked under it for protection as the knights clambered atop it and rushed straight across the ditch to the top of the embankment. I drew my sword and climbed up the sloping earthwork to be with Arthur.

Lancelot dashed forward, straight onto the crest of the embankment, where the barbarian warriors waited with their axes and swords. Arthur was rushing up behind him. He caught an axe thrust on his shield and took off the arm of the axe-wielder with a stroke from Excalibur. The man shrieked and fountained blood.

Is this how he will die? I asked myself, Trying to protect me?

I dove in beside him as the other knights rushed into the fight, slashing and killing with the maddened fury that rises when blood begins to flow. Sir Emrys took a spear in his gut but sliced out his killer's throat before he died. The knights were forming a wedge of steel, slowly pushing the barbarians back, down the rear slope of their embankment. We were outnumbered by perhaps a hundred to one, but the knights—protected by their chain mail and shields—were weaving a web of death with their dripping swords.

Lancelot pushed deeper into the swarming mass of barbarian warriors, his sword a blur, men screaming and stumbling as he stroked the life out of them. Arthur struggled to keep up with him, wielding Excalibur like a bloody buzz saw that took off arms, heads, split bare-chested warriors from shoulder to navel.

I tried to stay close behind Arthur, but he and Lancelot were driving deeper into the mass of roaring, screaming warriors and I had my hands full keeping barbarians off their backs. More and more of them came swarming up the embankment, eager to get to the handful of knights. The whole barbarian army seemed to be surging toward us.

Lancelot's squire went down, an axe buried in his skull, and Arthur stumbled over the body.

I saw it all in agonizing slow-motion: Arthur falling forward, thrusting his shield out in front of him to support himself as he went down. A huge barbarian, blond braids flying as he swung his axe in a mighty two-handed chop at Arthur's unprotected back. Lancelot not more than three feet away, but with his back turned to Arthur, hacking other barbarians to pieces. And me, separated from Arthur now by a good five yards, with half a dozen bloodied fighters between us.

"Arthur!" I screamed, driving through a flailing wall of fighting men.

Lancelot turned at the sound of my shout. Without an instant's hesitation he swung his shield toward the descending axe. I cut down two men trying to stand before me and pushed on toward Arthur, knowing I could not get to him in time. Lancelot caught the axeman's forearm with the edge of his shield, knocking the blow away from Arthur. His axe thudded harmlessly into the ground as Lancelot split his skull, helmet and all, with a tremendous slash of his sword.

Arthur got to one knee as I reached him. A spearman tried to get Arthur, but I yanked the spear out of his hands and drove my sword into his belly.

At the top of the earthwork we could see the entire mass of the barbarian army, hundreds of them rushing up the dirt slope to get at us, eager to wipe out our small force of knights and squires. There were far too many of them for us to have any hope of surviving.

It was like fighting against a tidal wave. We stood at the crest of the rampart and fought for what seemed like hours. No matter how many we killed, more warriors charged up the slope at us. Knights and squires went down as the barbarians shrieked their battle

cries and surged up at us with their spears and axes and swords.

We were only a handful to begin with. Our numbers were being whittled away. We slew three, four, seven men for every one we lost. But for every barbarian who went down, ten more charged up the earthen ramp at us. It was only a matter of time before we all were killed, like the Spartans at Thermopylae, three hundred men against an army. And we were far fewer than three hundred.

Then it happened. A bellowing roar came up from the woods on both sides of the road as the bulk of Arthur's knights and footmen charged out from the trees into the flanks of the surging torrent of barbarians. The knights were afoot, but I recognized them by the emblems on their shields: Sir Ector's red badger, young Tristram's Celtic cross, and the black hawk of Sir Bors, who was hacking through the surprised barbarians like the angel of death himself.

"I'm not interested in glory, my young friend. I'm interested in power"

All through history, troops that have withstood withering frontal assaults have broken and run when assailed from their flank or rear. Humans are made to look directly ahead; attacks from the side or from behind unnerve even the most battle-hardened soldiers.

Suddenly assaulted on both flanks, the barbarians broke and tried to run. They knew that a few miles down the Roman road was another defensive ditch, another entrenchment that could shelter them from these sword-wielding Celtic knights who seemed to be pouring out of the woods.

They still outnumbered us greatly, but they were shattered by surprise and sudden fear. From the top of the earthen rampart I saw them break and flee down the road.

But not far. Galloping up the road toward us came the rest of Arthur's knights, on their charging steeds, Gawain in the lead. They lowered their spears and smashed into the broken, disheartened barbarians.

It was soon finished. The paving stones were littered with bodies, slick with blood. A few of the barbarians had managed to slip away through the woods, but very few. The heart of their army lay dead and dying at the feet of Arthur's victorious men.

Victorious, but battered. Sir Bors was limping badly, his hip bleeding from an axe blow. Most of the other knights who had fought on foot were also wounded. To my surprise I found that I had taken a spear thrust in my side. I hadn't noticed it in the heat of battle. Now I automatically clamped down the blood vessels to stop the bleeding and lowered the pain signals along my nerves to a tolerable level.

I smiled tiredly as I watched the men patching each other's wounds. No need to bind my side; I could control my body well enough, and accelerated healing processes had been built into me.

Arthur slumped down beside me, resting his back against a tree, looking weary and grim. He was nicked here and there. Blood trickled from a slice along his right forearm.

"It's only a scratch," he said, when he noticed me staring at the wound.

Lancelot came up, all brightness and zeal. He was totally unharmed, untouched, his tunic not even muddied. Only the dents in his shield revealed that he had been in battle.

He squatted down beside Arthur. "We can gallop down the road and catch the few who got away."

Arthur shook his head.

"Why not?" Lancelot asked, surprised. He almost looked hurt. "It's not much past noon. We have plenty of time to dispatch them."

"They have another entrenchment up the road," Arthur said. "And still another after that."

That dimmed Lancelot's enthusiasm for less than a second. "What of it? We took this one, didn't we? We made great slaughter of them! Let's go on!"

"No," Arthur said, his voice low. "The cost was too high."

Arthur reached out and put a hand on Lancelot's shoulder. "We have gutted their army. They won't be raiding our villages and farmsteads now. We've taught them a lesson that they will remember for a long time."

"But we haven't driven them into the sea!"

"No, and we're not going to. Not now. We've lost too many men. We need to rest a bit and recruit more men. Then we move north against the Jutes."

Lancelot looked shocked. "And leave the Angles in their villages? Without driving them into the sea?"

"We don't have the strength to drive them into the sea. Not yet."

Shaking his head in disappointment, Lancelot murmured, "That's not the path to glory, my lord. Leaving them chastened isn't the same as a glorious victory."

With a tired smile, Arthur said, "I'm not interested in glory, my young friend. I'm interested in power."

It was clear that Lancelot did not understand, but I thought I did. The Angles would huddle behind their defensive earthworks and stay in their villages, the cream of their manhood killed. It would be a long time before they ventured out again to raid Celtic farms and settlements. Arthur would use that time to draw new recruits to his army, to march north and defeat the Jutes there, to drive the Scots back behind Hadrian's Wall and secure the northern kingdoms.

He would win great power for Ambrosius Aurelianus, making the old man a true High King among the Celts. And perhaps, I thought, Arthur himself would in the end become the High King. He was certainly showing that he understood the workings of power.

Aten wanted him dead, but it seemed to me that Arthur was actually on his way to uniting the fractious Celts. Maybe he would one day truly drive the barbarian invaders out of Britain. I vowed anew to help him all I could.

Then I thought of Lancelot, so eager for glory. Aten had meant for Lancelot to lead Arthur to his death in the battle. Instead, Lancelot had saved Arthur's life. I felt glad about that.

Yet I thought I heard, in the far recesses of my mind, Aten's cynical laughter. Lancelot will still be the agent of Arthur's death, the Golden One seemed to be saying. Wait and see. Wait and see.

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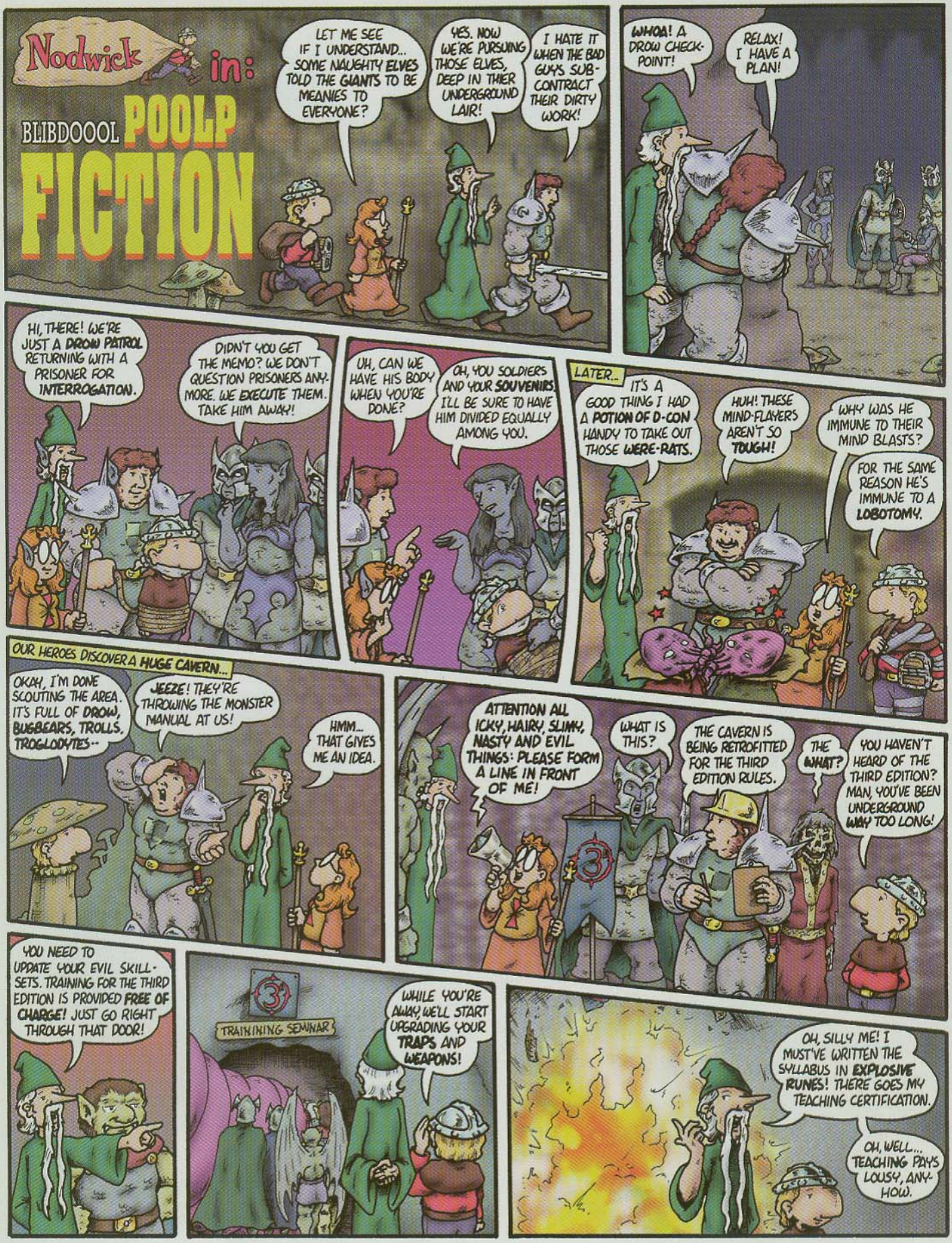
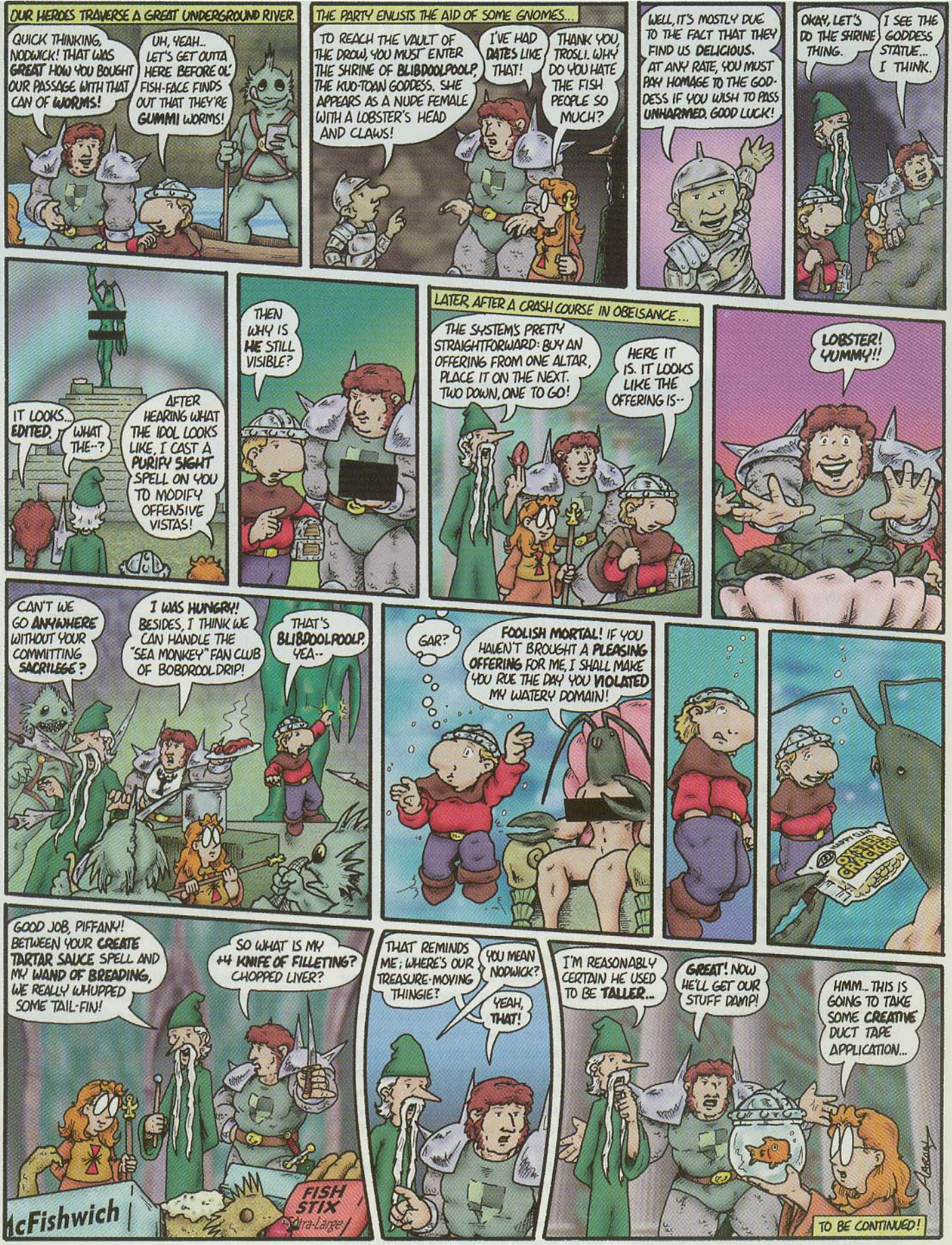

Nodwick in:
BLIBDOOOL POOLP FICTION
LET ME SEE IF I UNDERSTAND... SOME NAUGHTY ELVES TOLD THE GIANTS TO BE MEANIES TO EVERYONE?
YES. NOW WE'RE PURSUING THOSE ELVES, DEEP IN THIER UNDERGROUND LAIR!
I HATE IT WHEN THE BAD GUYS SUB-CONTRACT THEIR DIRTY WORK!
WHOA! A DROW CHECK-POINT!
RELAX! I HAVE A PLAN!
HI, THERE! WE'RE JUST A DROW PATROL RETURNING WITH A PRISONER FOR INTERROGATION.
DIDN'T YOU GET THE MEMO? WE DON'T QUESTION PRISONERS ANY-MORE. WE EXECUTE THEM. TAKE HIM AWAY!
UH, CAN WE HAVE HIS BODY WHEN YOU'RE DONE?
OH, YOU SOLDIERS AND YOUR SOUVENIRS. I'LL BE SURE TO HAVE HIM DIVIDED EQUALLY AMONG YOU.
LATER...
IT'S A GOOD THING I HAD A POTION OF D-CON HANDY TO TAKE OUT THOSE WERE-RATS.
HUH! THESE MIND-FLAYERS AREN'T SO TOUGH!
WHY WAS HE IMMUNE TO THEIR MIND BLASTS?
FOR THE SAME REASON HE'S IMMUNE TO A LOBOTOMY.
OUR HEROES DISCOVER A HUGE CAVERN...
OKAY, I'M DONE SCOUTING THE AREA. IT'S FULL OF DROW, BUGBEARS, TROLLS, TROGLODYTES--
JEEZE! THEY'RE THROWING THE MONSTER MANUAL AT US!
HMM... THAT GIVES ME AN IDEA.
ATTENTION ALL ICKY, HAIRY, SLIMY, NASTY AND EVIL THINGS: PLEASE FORM A LINE IN FRONT OF ME!
WHAT IS THIS?
THE CAVERN IS BEING RETROFITTED FOR THE THIRD EDITION RULES.
THE WHAT?
YOU HAVEN'T HEARD OF THE THIRD EDITION? MAN, YOU'VE BEEN UNDERGROUND WAY TOO LONG!
YOU NEED TO UPDATE YOUR EVIL SKILL-SETS. TRAINING FOR THE THIRD EDITION IS PROVIDED FREE OF CHARGE! JUST GO RIGHT THROUGH THAT DOOR!
TRAINING SEMINAR
WHILE YOU'RE AWAY, WE'LL START UPGRADING YOUR TRAPS AND WEAPONS!
OH, SILLY ME! I MUST'VE WRITTEN THE SYLLABUS IN EXPLOSIVE RUNES! THERE GOES MY TEACHING CERTIFICATION.
OH, WELL... TEACHING PAYS LOUSY, ANY-HOW.


OUR HEROES TRAVERSE A GREAT UNDERGROUND RIVER.
QUICK THINKING, NODWICK! THAT WAS GREAT HOW YOU BOUGHT OUR PASSAGE WITH THAT CAN OF WORMS!
UH, YEAH... LET'S GET OUTTA HERE BEFORE OL' FISH-FACE FINDS OUT THAT THEY'RE GUMMI WORMS!
THE PARTY ENLISTS THE AID OF SOME GNOMES...
TO REACH THE VAULT OF THE DROW, YOU MUST ENTER THE SHRINE OF BLIBDOOLPOOLP, THE KUO-TOAN GODDESS. SHE APPEARS AS A NUDE FEMALE WITH A LOBSTER'S HEAD AND CLAWS!
I'VE HAD DATES LIKE THAT!
THANK YOU, TROSLI. WHY DO YOU HATE THE FISH PEOPLE SO MUCH?
WELL, IT'S MOSTLY DUE TO THE FACT THAT THEY FIND US DELICIOUS. AT ANY RATE, YOU MUST PAY HOMAGE TO THE GODDESS IF YOU WISH TO PASS UNHARMED. GOOD LUCK!
OKAY, LET'S DO THE SHRINE THING.
I SEE THE GODDESS STATUE... I THINK.
IT LOOKS... EDITED.
WHAT THE--?
AFTER HEARING WHAT THE IDOL LOOKS LIKE, I CAST A PURIFY SIGHT SPELL ON YOU TO MODIFY OFFENSIVE VISTAS!
THEN WHY IS HE STILL VISIBLE?
LATER, AFTER A CRASH COURSE IN OBEISANCE...
THE SYSTEM'S PRETTY STRAIGHTFORWARD: BUY AN OFFERING FROM ONE ALTAR, PLACE IT ON THE NEXT. TWO DOWN, ONE TO GO!
HERE IT IS. IT LOOKS LIKE THE OFFERING IS--
LOBSTER! YUMMY!!
CAN'T WE GO ANYWHERE WITHOUT YOUR COMMITTING SACRILEGE?
I WAS HUNGRY! BESIDES, I THINK WE CAN HANDLE THE "SEA MONKEY" FAN CLUB OF BOBDROOLDRIP!
THAT'S BLIBDOOLPOOLP, YEA--
GAR?
FOOLISH MORTAL! IF YOU HAVEN'T BROUGHT A PLEASING OFFERING FOR ME, I SHALL MAKE YOU RUE THE DAY YOU VIOLATED MY WATERY DOMAIN!
GOOD JOB, PIFFANY! BETWEEN YOUR CREATE TARTAR SAUCE SPELL AND MY WAND OF BREADING, WE REALLY WHUPPED SOME TAIL-FIN!
SO WHAT IS MY +4 KNIFE OF FILLETING? CHOPPED LIVER?
McFishwich
FISH STIX
Extra-Large
THAT REMINDS ME; WHERE'S OUR TREASURE-MOVING THINGIE?
YOU MEAN NODWICK?
YEAH, THAT!
I'M REASONABLY CERTAIN HE USED TO BE TALLER...
GREAT! NOW HE'LL GET OUR STUFF DAMP!
HMM... THIS IS GOING TO TAKE SOME CREATIVE DUCT TAPE APPLICATION...
TO BE CONTINUED!

The Bestiary

Beasts of the Pomarj

by James Jacobs • illustrated by Carlo Arellano

The Pomarj is notorious throughout the Flanaess as a breeding ground for all sorts of goblinoid riffraff; orcs, gnolls, goblins, kobolds, and even giants lurk in this hilly country. What outlanders do not realize is that the Pomarj is also rife with other sorts of life.

Monsters of all sizes lurk in secluded valleys, forests, and caves throughout the Pomarj, and many of these creatures are magical. Rumor holds that long ago, a powerful group of magical entities were imprisoned in deep caverns under the Drachensgrab Hills that comprise the core of the Pomarj. It is said that these beings have tainted the Hills, warping normal life into grotesque monstrosities. Others believe that a powerful druid cursed the entire region long ago, and since that fateful day animals have grown horrible and bizarre. Whatever the reason, strange monsters like behirs, chimeras, and displacer beasts are disturbingly common in this region.

The Pomarj also houses beasts that are rarely found outside its borders. Most of these monsters live in the more "civilized" regions of the Pomarj, where they compete with the goblinoid tribes for territory. The most fecund of these creatures is the savage grimorian, a bulky reptilian beast that often hides in the undergrowth near well-traveled roads waiting for unknowing prey to wander by. Many tribes of the Pomarj have grown adept at spotting these predators, and they take great glee in leading adventurers or explorers into the waiting clutches of a hungry grimorian. They have even perfected methods of curing grimorian hides to make effective, if cumbersome, armor.

The forests of the Pomarj are home to vicious insects known as skeraths. Although more than a few reckless goblinoids have been incapacitated and carried off by skerath swarms, the insects' hives are still sought and plundered by orc tribes. Skerath larvae are magical, and the orcs have learned that consuming the squirming grubs grants them potent defenses.

Not all of the beasts of the Pomarj are so easy to plunder for resources. Many caves in the region are infested with fearsome skittermaws. Goblins in particular are terrified of these horrors. Skittermaws can sense and project empathic signals, and anyone who's felt the ravenous hunger they emit during combat can attest to these fears.

Finally, some beasts dwelling in the Pomarj are so reclusive that few of the locals even know that they exist. A good example is the mysterious raknakle, a hill dwelling fey that defends its lair with druidic magic, telekinetically hurled stones, and even stranger defenses. Raknakle lairs quickly develop reputations as being haunted, and the humanoids of the Pomarj avoid these regions.

Other bizarre and unseen creatures doubtless lurk in forgotten vales and deep caverns in the Pomarj; it only remains for some resourceful heroes to find them!

Grimorian

The grimorian is a savage predator that roams the Drachensgrab Hills. They are not picky about what they eat, as long as it's meat; anything from a deer to a goblin to another grimorian is fair game. As these beasts are slow and ungainly, they tend to hide along game trails to ambush their prey.

Grimorians are reptilian quadrupeds. They are compact and stocky, 10 feet long from head to tail and 4 feet high at the shoulder. The standard grimorian weighs nearly 500 pounds. They have stubby tails and powerful legs with taloned feet. A grimorian's neck measures almost 3 feet in length, and when at rest sits in a compact "S" curve. They have tiny eyes, large nostrils, and a set of jaws filled with three rows of razor sharp teeth. Grimorian hides are thick and scaly, with complex striped patterns of varying shades of green and brown.

Grimorian skins are much sought after by the humanoids of the Pomarj for armor. Grimorian hide armor has an armor bonus of +4, but it is more cumbersome than regular hide armor. The maximum Dexterity bonus one can have while wearing such hide armor is +2, and a Medium-size suit of grimorian hide armor weighs 30 pounds. This additional bulk is usually of little concern to the humanoids, however, for wearing a suit of grimorian hide armor is a mark of one's personal strength.

Combat

A grimorian lurks alongside game trails or well-traveled roads and lashes out at passing victims. Due to its natural camouflage and incredible patience, the grimorian receives a +4 racial bonus to Hide checks, which has been noted in the sidebar. A grimorian usually bites its chosen victim once and then allows it to flee. The grimorian then stalks its bitten prey, waiting for the wound to fester and weaken the victim so it can be attacked and killed at the grimorian's leisure.

The grimorian's long neck enables it to strike prey from up to 10 feet away.

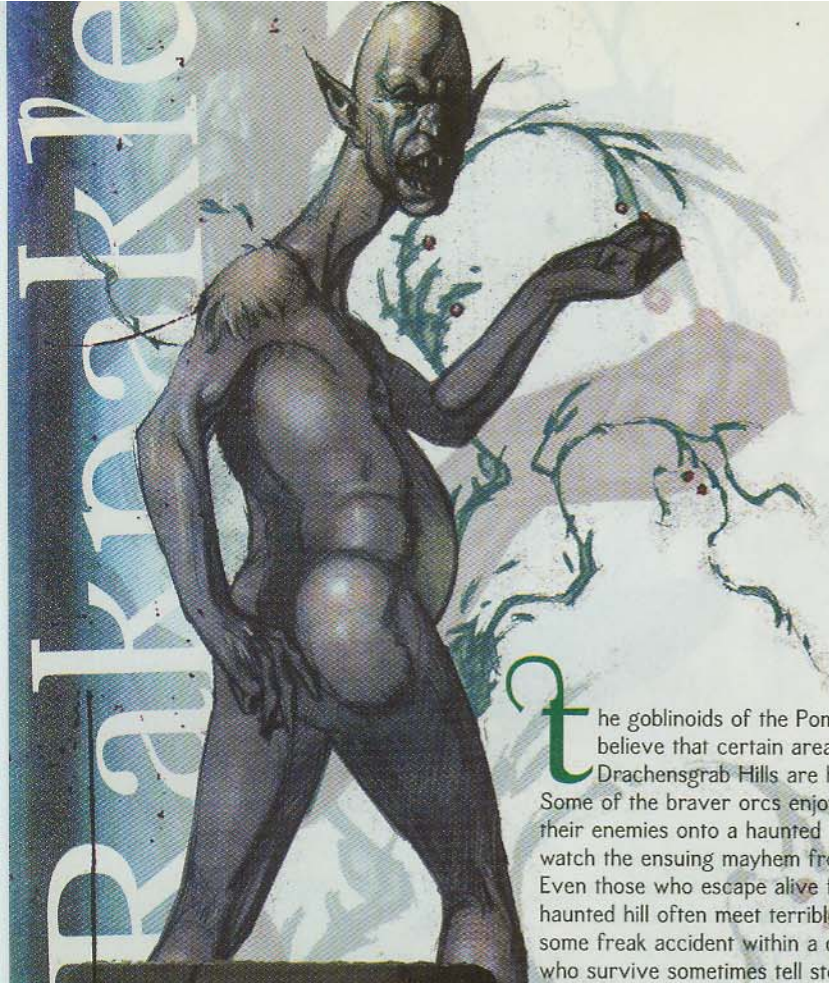
Disease (Ex): The gumlines of a grimorian's mouth are studded with tiny pockets in which rotting meat collects. Grimorian bite wounds are liberally bathed with the beast's filthy saliva; a bite victim must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 13) or be infected with a debilitating disease called stinksweat. Symptoms of the malady include dry mouth, fever, blurred vision, dizziness and even fainting spells, and profuse foul-smelling perspiration. Stinksweat is fast acting, with an incubation period of 1d4 hours. Once the incubation period is over, the victim moves in a random direction at no faster than her base speed each round and suffers a -2 penalty to attack rolls and saving throws until the disease runs its course. Unfortunately, stinksweat victims rarely live this long, for they are often tracked down and eaten by the grimorian before they have a chance to recover.

GRIMORIAN GAME STATISTICS

Large Beast

Hit Dice	3d10 + 6 (22 hp)
Initiative	-1 (Dex)
Speed	20 ft.
AC	15 (-1 Dex, +6 natural)
Attacks	+6 melee (bite)
Damage	1d6+3
Face/Reach	5 ft. by 10 ft./10 ft.
Spec. Attacks	Disease
Spec. Qualities	Scent
Saves	Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +2
Abilities	Str 16, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 4
Skills	Hide +10, Spot +6
Feats	Weapon Focus (bite)
Climate/Terrain	Temperate Hills
Organization	Solitary (1)
Challenge Rating	3
Treasure	None
Alignment	Always neutral
Adv. Range	4-6 HD (Large)

Raknakle



RAKNAKLE GAME STATISTICS

Medium Fey

Hit Dice	2d6 (7 hp)
Initiative	+3 (Dex)
Speed	30 ft., Burrow 30 ft.
AC	16 (+3 luck, +3 Dex)
Attacks	+4 ranged (stone)
Damage	1d4
Face/Reach	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Spec. Attacks	Unlucky gaze, spell-like abilities
Spec. Qualities	Luck, burrow
Saves	Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +7
Abilities	Str 11, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 14
Skills	Hide +11, Spot +5, Intuit Direction +9, Knowledge (nature) +9, Sense Motive +8, Wilderness Lore +9
Feats	Point Blank Shot
Climate/Terrain	Temperate Hills
Organization	Solitary (1)
Challenge Rating	1
Treasure	Standard
Alignment	Usually chaotic neutral
Adv. Range	3-4 HD (Medium)

The goblinoids of the Pomarj firmly believe that certain areas of the Drachensgrab Hills are haunted. Some of the braver orcs enjoy luring their enemies onto a haunted hill just to watch the ensuing mayhem from afar. Even those who escape alive from a haunted hill often meet terrible ends in some freak accident within a day. Those who survive sometimes tell stories of strange eyeless humanoids that pass through the ground like ghosts. The orcs call these creatures "Hill Haunts."

The supposed hill haunts are actually living creatures called raknakles, fey that live in caves under small, round hills. The lairs have no entrances or exits, for raknakles can pass through stone and earth. Whether certain hills spontaneously generate raknakles or the creatures come from elsewhere is uncertain.

Raknakle hills are typically barren of vegetation apart from tall dry grass and a single patch of huckleberries at the peak. These berries are the raknakle's only source of nourishment. If the bushes are destroyed, the raknakle soon starves to death. Needless to say, a raknakle protects its berries fiercely.

A raknakle generally operates from hiding, using its spell-like abilities and telekinetic power to hurl rocks at trespassers.

A raknakle's shape is humanoid, with long arms and legs, a potbelly, and gray skin. The head of a raknakle is somewhat pointed. The creature is bald but sports thick patches of hair on its shoulders and the backs of its hands and feet. Its neck is twice as long as that of a normal human. Its face is angular, with narrow jaws and a long, hooked nose. The raknakle's eyes are its most prominent feature; they are simply deep, empty sockets that emit a pale yellow smoke that smells of honey.

Combat

A raknakle's normal mode of attack is to animate a small stone and launch it at anyone in range. Treat these stones as sling bullets for purposes of range and damage. A stone can be fired from any point on the raknakle's hill, which is usually no more than 100 feet in diameter. The raknakle often launches these attacks while hiding at the peak of its hill or while disguised by its *tree shape* ability. The raknakle is physically weak, so it avoids melee combat at all times.

Unlucky Gaze (Su): Anyone who meets the smoking gaze of a raknakle must make a Will save (DC 12) or suffer the curse of unluck. This curse persists for 24 hours unless it is dispelled magically. For the duration of the curse, the victim takes a -2 luck penalty to all saving throws, attack rolls, and checks. If the curse is allowed to run its course, the victim must make another Will save (DC 12) or suffer a minor accident. The DM should determine the nature of the accident based on the character's situation at the time. The challenge level of the accident equals the character's level and should be modeled after the traps listed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): A raknakle can *dimension door* between the peak of its hill and its underground lair at will as a 5th-level sorcerer. It can also enhance the huckleberries atop the hill three times a day (treat as the *goodberry* spell cast by a 5th-level druid). A raknakle can also manifest the following spell-like abilities once a day each as a 5th-level druid: *entangle, obscuring mist, summon nature's ally I, tree shape,* and *charm person or animal.*

Burrow (Ex): A raknakle can glide through stone, dirt, or almost any other sort of earth, but not metal of any sort. Its burrowing leaves behind no tunnel or hole, nor does it create any ripple or other signs of its presence. A *move earth* spell cast on an area containing a burrowing raknakle flings it back 30 feet, stunning the creature for 1 round unless it succeeds at a Fortitude save (DC 15). A raknakle cannot use its hurled stone attacks or spell-like abilities while burrowing.

Luck (Su): The raknakle has a +3 racial bonus to its Armor Class and saving throws from luck. These bonuses have been figured into the game statistics.

Skerath

Skeraths are flying, 14-inch long insects. They have pulpy bodies covered with black fur, and their abdomens have a red underbelly and a long needle-like stinger. Skerath wings are quite large and have colorful spiral patterns that undulate and swirl of their own accord. Flying skeraths make a high-pitched drone that is both distinctive and distracting.

Usually, skeraths are encountered in small swarms in wooded areas. Skeraths are quite strong for their size and have been known to work together to carry off incapacitated victims many times their own weight. Such victims invariably become food for skerath larvae inside a hive.

Skerath hives are found in dead trees. A skerath hive is fashioned of a bright red resin that the insects exude from their mouths. A hive typically appears as a large red bulbous mass bulging from the inside of a dead tree. Hives can often consume entire fallen trees measuring dozens of feet long from the inside out. Local animal life avoid skerath hives, but orcs often risk great personal danger to break open these hives to get at the larvae that can be found inside. Skerath larvae are defenseless grubs the size of a banana. The larvae also contain high amounts of latent magical energy that aids in their growth into full grown skerath. Although they taste somewhat like rancid cheese, eating a skerath larvae grants a *mirror image* ability as if cast by a 3rd-level sorcerer to the person stubborn enough to choke the thing down. The orcs of the Pomarj are fond of using skerath larvae to aid themselves in battle, but the larvae tend to die 1d4 days after they are separated from their hives. A standard skerath hive yields 3d4 larvae.

Combat

Skeraths attempt to incapacitate their victims by repeatedly stinging them until their poison takes full effect. Once a victim succumbs to the poison, the skeraths carry the victim back to their hive to serve as a food source.

Poison (Ex): Anyone stung by a skerath must make a Will save (DC 11). Failure indicates the magical poison has affected the victim's mind, baffling his senses and memories. Treat the victim as if under the effects of a *confusion* spell cast by a 7th-level sorcerer. After one minute, the victim must make a Will saving throw (DC 11) again; if this second save is successful the *confusion* ends. If it fails, the *confusion* still ends, but the victim lapses into a state of catatonia that lasts for 2d4 hours.

Drone (Su): Flying skeraths emit a discordant drone that disrupts spellcasting. Anyone attempting to cast a spell while within 10 feet of a flying skerath must make a Concentration check (DC 11) or lose the spell.

Mirror Image (Sp): While in flight, the strange colorful patterns on a skerath's wings seem to leap off to create multiple images of the insect. Flying skeraths are almost always attended by 1d4 mirror images. Skeraths can use this ability at will; treat them as the target of a *mirror image* spell cast by a 7th-level sorcerer. These images vanish if struck by an attack. They also vanish whenever a skerath stops flying. Skeraths can create new images only once per hour.

SKERATH GAME STATISTICS

Tiny Magical Beast

Hit Dice	1d10 (5 hp)
Initiative	+3 (Dex)
Speed	40 ft., Fl 80 ft. (good)
AC	15 (+2 size, +3 Dex)
Attacks	1 sting, +1 melee
Damage	Sting, 1d4+1
Face/Reach	2.5 ft. by 2.5 ft. by 2.5 ft.
Spec. Attacks	Poison, drone
Spec. Qualities	Mirror image
Saves	Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +1
Abilities	Str 13, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 12
Skills	Search +2, Spot +6
Feats	Flyby attack
Climate/Terrain	Any forest
Organization	Solitary (1), swarm (2d4) or hive (4d6)
Challenge Rating	1
Treasure	None
Alignment	Always neutral
Adv. Range	2-3 HD (Small), 4-6 HD (Medium)

Skittermaw

Skittermaws are about the size of a watermelon and resemble nothing so much as an upside-down severed spider's head. A row of six multifaceted eyes are located on the lower half of the body while a pair of slavering spider fangs protrude from the upper half. A mass of long thin tentacles studded with tiny hooks writhes in a tangled nest atop the creature's body, and four long, spindly legs placed equally around the circumference of the body allow it to move very quickly. In fact, their clawed feet allow them to scuttle up walls and even across ceilings with ease. They weigh about 15 pounds

Skittermaws are far from unintelligent, and they often gather together to hunt in packs. They are masters of the art of the ambush and often lurk in well-traveled passageways or intersections underground, waiting for a chance to strike at an unwary passerby. This talent is reflected in the Skittermaw's +8 racial bonus to Move Silently checks. Skittermaw attacks are fast, ferocious, and terrifying. Goblins in particular exhibit a great fear of them because skittermaws have a fondness for goblin meat and are not above making midnight raids on unsuspecting goblin tribes that settle too close to a skittermaw nest.

These beasts are unnaturally silent when they move, and their motions are fluid and almost hypnotic. The most unusual thing about skittermaws is their method of communication. By creating specific patterns in the air with their tentacles, a skittermaw can communicate with any other skittermaw in sight. Skittermaws are also empathic and can sense emotions in other living creatures within 10 feet, as well as project their own emotions into any beings they touch. Skittermaws feed on negative emotions and seem to take a perverse delight in tormenting their victims.

Skittermaw Game Statistics

Small Aberration

Hit Dice	2d8+4 (13 hp)
Initiative	+2 (Dex)
Speed	40 ft., Climb 40 ft.
AC	14 (+2 Dex, +1 size, +1 natural)
Attacks	4 tentacles +2 melee; bite +0 melee
Damage	Tentacle 1d4+1; Bite 1d6
Face/Reach	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Spec. Attacks	Improved grab, cause panic
Spec. Qualities	Poisonous blood
Saves	Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +3
Abilities	Str 12, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 14
Skills	Climb +8, Hide +7, Jump +5, Move Silently +13
Feats	Multiattack
Climate/Terrain	Any underground
Organization	Solitary (1) or pack (1d4+2)
Challenge Rating	2
Treasure	None
Alignment	Usually chaotic evil
Adv. Range	3-4 HD (Medium)

Combat

The skittermaw's normal method of attack is to bite and lash at a victim with its tentacles. Although most skittermaws have over two dozen tentacles, they can only attack with up to four at a time, and they can attack only one target at a time.

Improved Grab (Ex): If a skittermaw makes a successful hit with one of its tentacles, it can make a grapple check as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If successful, the skittermaw deals normal damage and is anchored to its victim. An attached tentacle does not continue to inflict damage.

Once the skittermaw has grabbed a target, it can wrap its remaining tentacles around the victim, granting the skittermaw a +2 bonus to attack rolls with its bite. An attached skittermaw can be torn off with a successful opposed Strength check, but doing so deals 2d4 points of damage to the victim as the barbed tentacles rip loose.

Cause Panic (Su): A skittermaw that manages to grab a victim with all of its tentacles (see above) will project its ravenous hunger into its victim's mind. The victim must make a Will save (DC 13) or become overwhelmed with panic, suffering a -4 morale penalty to all checks and attack rolls until the skittermaw is detached or killed.

Poisonous Blood (Ex): The blood of a skittermaw is poisonous to non-skittermaws. Anyone who comes in contact with skittermaw blood must make a Fortitude save (DC 12) or take 1d4 points of temporary Strength damage. One minute later, the victim must make another Fortitude save or suffer 2d4 points of temporary Strength damage. Anyone who makes a successful piercing or slashing melee attack against a skittermaw and fails a Reflex save (DC 11) has been sprayed with blood. A successful piercing or slashing attack against a skittermaw attached to a victim automatically exposes the victim to the blood.

The Stag Lass

by Ed Greenwoodb • illustrated by Ron Spencer

Volothamp Geddarm at your service once more, gentles, setting truths of the Realms before you like the moonflowers that drift down to open, glowing with soft faerie light, on warm summer evenings in certain forests of Faerûn.

My topic this time is the Rite of the Stag Lass, which seems to fascinate men so that I'm often asked for rather salacious details of it in taverns—and even, on one memorable occasion, in the cloisters of Candlekeep.[1] For those few who know nothing of this curious summer ritual, which takes place each year on the first good-weather day of the month of Flamerule, read on.

A human woman from the city of Waterdeep (traditionally "a noble maiden") takes the role of the Stag Lass. Wearing a stag's head mask, complete with antlers, and a tunic and breeches of dark green, she rides a horse bareback through the village of Amphail from the direction of Waterdeep to well beyond the far side of the village, waving to the gathered inhabitants all the way.

The woman then dismounts and returns on foot (usually at a run) through Amphail to its central tavern, The Stag-Horned Flagon.[2] Along the way, villagers who see her usually give chase and fling goblets of water, soured wine, or old milk over her.

When the Stag Lass reaches the bar of the Stag, she must drain an old, antler-adorned drinking cup, traditionally filled with the most bitter beer the tavernmaster can find. At the bottom of the cup is a beautiful piece of jewelry, which is hers to keep.

A bath is then brought for the Lass; as she bathes, those gathered in the tavern drink her health. All beer poured in the Stag for her or for any resident of Amphail from the moment she enters the bath to the next dawn is free.

The History of the Rite

This ritual has been held annually for at least three hundred years, or so locals believe. Although the early years are more than a little hazy and the span might be shorter, no one can remember a year in which the Rite didn't occur. The celebration commemorates the violent death of Asaudrae Daerantree, a priestess of Mielikki who dwelt in Amphail over three centuries ago, and who had the goddess-granted gift of being able to take on the shape of a stag. (No, not a doe, as some scholars mistakenly "correct.") She was wont to spend long periods as a stag, roaming the forest and learning all of its lore that she could. One day, the inevitable befell her: Waterdhavian hunters pursued a splendid stag, wounding it with crossbow quarrels and javelins, and gave chase as it fled into Amphail.

These hunters claimed to have no idea their quarry was anything more than a beast, but villagers say they pursued and flung weapons even after a gasping, reeling Asaudrae reverted to her own shape. Trailing blood and pierced by quarrels, the priestess somehow reached the bar of the Stag, and there she died, pleading for aid, just as the nobles burst through the door with their knives drawn to fell their kill.

Some citizens of Amphail (and most worshippers of Mielikki) believe that Asaudrae was the goddess Mielikki herself, in disguise, and that the tavern and the village are sacred to the Lady of the Forest. Many rangers and druids come to Amphail every year, where they kiss the tavern's long, polished bar. No one ridicules them; legend insists that any true worshipper of Mielikki who kisses the bar can henceforth ask the goddess one question per year—and hear in her mind a clear, honest answer from the Lady of the Forest.[3]

The Rite Today

For at least the last twenty years, the Rite has been sponsored by priests of Mielikki active in the North. These priests provide the costume and the

ELMINSTER'S NOTES

1. Want a little more truth? Ed of the Greenwood asked for more details of the Stag Lass—far more than Volo ever bothered to find out—because of repeated demands for information from among the ranks of gamers. I'd no inkling so many of them were such admirers of stags.
2. An establishment described with, generosity demands I say, threadbare adequacy by Volo in his *Volo's Guide to the North*, pages 17-19.
3. Volo is ever the skeptic. I tell all of ye thus: Mielikki does answer those who venerate her (above all other divine beings, not merely when 'tis convenient) and make some action in support of her faith within a year in which they put a question to her. If she refuses to answer, she tells them wherein their failure lies—but only accomplishment of an arduous quest can induce her to yield up an answer within a year in which a questioner hasn't measured up.

horse, and they have the jewelry "won" by the Lass crafted in Neverwinter or Waterdeep. Just who is involved changes from year to year (it's an honored duty, and dream-visions sent to the faithful by the goddess has much to do with who takes part), but an elderly priest named Ilkin Ermbroar is a veteran of many Rites.[4]

The Stag Lass is chosen from among the residents—not necessarily citizens—of Waterdeep, although she is most often a Waterdhavian born and bred, and usually of noble birth. "Maiden" in this case doesn't mean a virgin, though the Stag Lass is usually young, unmarried, and beautiful. She is often, these days, a worshipper of Mielikki, but she might just be someone who wants to do the Rite as a lark or to gain fame, honor, or the promise of aid in the future—a part of the Rite that the general public rarely knows but which worshippers of Meilikki consider of paramount importance.

The Stag Lass is chosen by worshippers of Mielikki (supported by Laeral Arunsun and other important citizens of Waterdeep) in an ongoing process at the various parties and revels held by nobles from after the previous Rite until the last tenday of Kythorn.

The choice is usually made by the month of Mirtul, but there have been instances of maidens with cold feet—or watchful kin—who have changed their minds or been prevented from performing the Rite, at the last minute. "Kitten" of the Lords of Waterdeep once "stood in" as a last-minute replacement for a missing Stag Lass, cloaked in a magical disguise furnished by the spells of Laeral—and it's likely that female apprentices from Blackstaff Tower have done so on other occasions.

The Stag Lass is chosen thus: Bards and storytellers sympathetic to the aims and causes of Mielikki tell tales to young female revelers of the Rite and of its importance, and speak of how the goddess likes to smile upon those who perform it. "Mielikki looks at those who bear her tokens," the talespinners usually say. "Tokens like this." They then leave a silver staghead pin, or three, for all to see on a table, then move on to other stories, usually moving away to draw attention elsewhere so that an interested lady can pick up a token unseen. They always ensure that other identical tokens can be found on ledges, tables, and in many other places at the revel.

These tokens bear minor magics set by low-level wizards of the Watchful Order, and they can be traced. The untaken ones are gathered up after each revel, and any maiden who takes one is later visited by priests of Mielikki or former Stag Lasses who befriend her and question her about her aspirations in life. If they don't deem her arrogant, self-absorbed, materialistic, or manipulative, they work around to asking her whether she'd be willing to be a Stag Lass.

Many ladies don't really want to take part, or they change their minds after initial acceptance because they don't want to be seen as "strange" or "common and wanton" by their peers. Still, the selectors usually have two or three suitable candidates by the end of spring, of whom one is the most avid. The others are eventually told that "Mielikki desires them to wait."

The Route of the Stag Lass

When a Stag Lass rides through the streets of Amphail, no locals throw anything at her; instead, they often call out or even trade jests with her. It's the maiden's choice whether her ride is leisurely or a dramatic gallop. When done, she need not dismount within sight of the village—a priest of Mielikki usually awaits her, up the road, to take and tend her horse—but she must return through Amphail on the main road and lanes, not through backyards, orchards, or fields.

On her run back through the village, no one is allowed to catch hold of the Lass, directly bar her way, or knock her down. Rangers who worship Mielikki always lurk nearby to see to the safety of the Lass, since several maidens were either stripped and flogged in the past, or even attacked or carried off, by swordsmen hired by parents or rivals who desire that the lass fail to complete the Rite. Some Stag Lasses try to sprint and arrive as unscathed as possible, and others dawdle or flirt. Some have even invited young children and the infirm to douse them, and others have taken every side lane and gate in the village to give everyone a chance at them. The mask must be worn, but several Lasses

4. Ilkin Ermbroar is in thy game terms a male human Clr7 and is usually to be found in wooded areas northeast of Waterdeep. He's very weathered of face and gnarled of hands, is thin and wild-haired (although gray and white locks are conquering his former darker tresses), and wears simple robes and boots. Ye may know him by his fierce green eyes—that flame like lamps when he's angered—and by the staff he carries: a rough length of branch always studded with green, growing shoots and leaves. He carries some weight with his goddess, I hear.

who've valued their garments above their modesty, for they're allowed to wear a favorite item or two as adornment over the dark green garb, have left their costume with the priest who took their horse, then dashed for the tavern wearing only underclothes, or boots, or just their own bare skins.

The cup that awaits them is larger than many great war-helms; the Rite is incomplete if the Lass fails to drink all of its contents, though she can do so in as many sips as she desires. The drink she downs might be so strong as to need chewing or so poor as to be dismissed as a "dung-draught" by drinkers, but it can't be spoiled, nor can it have been tainted by spirits, poisons, or anything else not normally present in such a quaff.

The jewelry at the bottom of the cup is always fashioned of silver or gold in a smooth-curved or swirling design and set with gems. (Blue, brown, and green stones are favored over red, yellow, and orange gems.) It's usually worth more than 25,000 gp, and it bears a minor *everbright* enchantment, though some of these "Rite gift" pieces have been enchanted with the ability to glow with a faint, localized *faerie fire* (usually blue-white) when grasped and ordered, or if the bearer is in the presence of strong magic or danger. Stronger enchantments are rare, though at least once the equivalent of a *Quaal's feather token* has been given.

The Lass bathes in full view of all, in an open carry-bath usually set on a table in the taproom of the Stag-Horned Flagon. The bathing can be performed clothed, unclad, or partially clad, but it must be barefoot and unmasked.

Most Lasses remain at the tavern overnight (their stay is, of course, for free), feasting and drinking with all who care to visit, but they don't usually stay in the bath for long. Priests of Mielikki take it away and pour its water on gardens and newly planted trees with blessings for lush growth.

THE MOST IMPORTANT GIFT GRANTED TO THE STAG LASS IS SOMETHING FEW KNOW ABOUT ...

The Boons

The most important gift granted to the Stag Lass is not the jewelry but something few non-Mielikkians even know about: the promise of the senior priest of Mielikki presiding over the Rite to aid the Stag Lass in any one future deed or endeavor. Past instances of such aid have included rescuing a Lass from an unhappy marriage, captivity, the ravages of disease, blackmail, and even unwanted pregnancy when a husband wanted sons from an ill wife.

This promise binds the collective clergy of Mielikki, not just the individual priest; some aidings have involved the work and attention of forty priests or more. One Stag Lass was recently taken clear through the High Forest by a ranger to escape pursuers. Another, some years back, had her debts paid off by the clergy to keep her from being jailed or sold into slavery by creditors. A third was hidden by the clergy under a variety of shapes and names to keep her alive long enough to inherit family wealth and title in the face of relatives who wanted to arrange her "accidental" demise.

Traditionally, a Stag Lass who has completed the Rite is considered to be free of any feuds, guild memberships, marriage agreements, or other obligations that her noble birth or actions of her parents or guardians have drawn her into—if, that is, and only if, she desires to be so freed. A father who promised his daughter in marriage to another noble would be widely criticized in Waterdeep if he forced her to go through with the wedding, or openly punished her for failing to do so, after she performed the Rite and then refused the match.

Performance as a Stag Lass also offers a face-saving escape from justice for minor offenses, but more often the rite simply allows a shy and overly nagged or controlled maid a chance to spread her wings and taste some independence.

Persons sympathetic to Mielikki (experienced trail-guiding rangers in particular) often agree to guide and guard the Stag Lass on a trip to a destination of her choosing immediately after the Rite. (This is not considered to be the aid promised by the priests, but something extra.) Such a service allows an unhappy, oppressed young lady the chance to escape Waterdhavian life for good.

There are rumors that fervent worshippers of Mielikki who perform as Stag Lasses launch themselves on careers in the church of Mielikki, in some cases even acquiring priestly abilities where they lacked all aptitude before. These few are favored by the goddess lifelong—but only clergy of Our Lady of the Forest are qualified to speak on such things, and to date they haven't cared to.

A STAG LASS WHO HAS COMPLETED THE RITE IS CONSIDERED TO BE FREE OF ANY FEUDS, GUILD MEMBERSHIPS, MARRIAGE AGREEMENTS, OR OTHER OBLIGATIONS...

Current Clack

One recent Stag Lass of note was Cheslaera Fallowfern, born of a wealthy merchant family of the North Ward. Her family was the sort sometimes called "swirlcloaks" in Waterdeep, because they aren't noble but would like to be, and they attend all the right revels, buy the favor of nobles, and ape the habits, dress, and interests of the nobility in hopes of being mistaken for them. Cheslaera was a plain, rather sulky girl, bored and unregarded—but she had a will of iron and dreams of seeing the Realms and obeying no father or husband. She walked unclad to the tavern, making no attempt to avoid being pelted or ridiculed, and she even waited at one cottage while an old man too feeble to expect to take part in the Rite went to his larder to get some wine to dash over her. Cheslaera arrived in the Stag in the midst of an admiring throng, danced the night away when the Rite was done, and by morning had gathered half a dozen smitten adventurers around herself to form a new adventuring band.

The Flaming Sword Riders rode straight to Silverymoon to request a charter from Alustriel, received one, and have spent their days since battling orcs and other beasts in the North. They have also explored ruins and isolated wizards' towers, and uncovered at least one dragon hoard, which, so the rumors run, is haunted by the chilling spirit of either an undead dragon or one of its victims.

Cheslaera is the leader of the Riders and has become a woman of wealth and influence with investments (and lovers) in Waterdeep, Silverymoon, Everlund, Neverwinter, and Secomber. She's said to be contemplating either founding a new fortress-city in the North to trade with the barbarians and dwarven and gnome miners or else taking service with Alustriel in defending and expanding the nascent realm of Luruar.[5]

5. A lass to watch, to be sure. More hard-faced than handsome and more rough than refined, aye, but she did come across an enchanted blade with a mind and will of its own—one that had mastered more men than I care to recall and bent it to her will. Nay, I'll not say its name and powers here; every adventurer should be allowed some secrets.

PERFORMANCE AS A STAG LASS ALSO OFFERS A FACE-SAVING ESCAPE FROM JUSTICE FOR MINOR OFFENSES.

Mind flayers

no. 15

by Mike Selinker

In the world of DRAGONLANCE, there are dozens of A-list characters. Here, it's your challenge to put 31 of those characters into the grid using only their letter As as your guide. All the As have been provided. Fill in the names across and down, interlocking words like in *Scrabble*. Two letters cannot be adjacent to one another without being part of the same entry. When you're done, some squares will be empty. Watch your step, because this one's for Legends only!

			A							
A		A								
						A				
								A		
					A		A			
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WORD LIST

ARIAKAS	GARGATH	LAURANA	STURM
ASTINUS	GILTHAS	OTIK	TANIS
BRODARN	HEALL	REDMON	TARN
BUPU	HUMA	SANTO	THEROS
CARAMON	KANG	SARA	TIKA
CLAES	KARRIGA	SILVARA	TOEDE
FEATHER	KITIARA	SITHEL	USHA
FLINT	KOTHAS	SOTH	

MIND BLAST

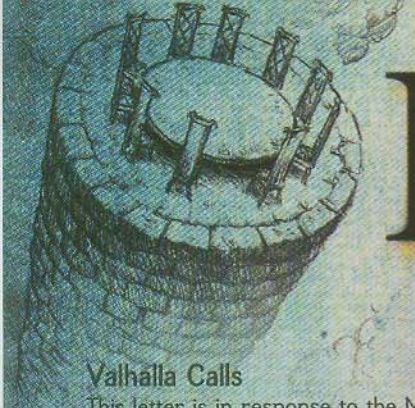
This one might require dusting off your old gaming books. In the 1st Edition *Monster Manual*, there was a named being who, when the letters "CH" were added to his name, made a word that meant either "one who kills" or "one who sends out cabs." Who was he?

You can find the solution to this *MIND BLAST* on page 124.

no. 14 SOLUTION

The spells are:

1. *spider climb*
2. *fireball*
3. *augury*
4. *call lightning*
5. *Tenser's transformation*
6. *Leomund's secret chest*
7. *snakes to sticks* (reverse of *sticks to snakes*)
8. *conjure (water) elemental*
9. *mirror image*
10. *find familiar* (1st Edition only)
11. *silence 15' radius*
12. *slow poison*
13. *simulacrum*
14. *reverse gravity*
15. *reincarnate* (but not *reincarnation*)
16. *massmorph*
17. *blink*
18. *guards and wards*
19. *delayed blast fireball*
20. *feign death*



Forum

Valhalla Calls

This letter is in response to the May, 2000 Question of the Month: "Have you based adventures on historical or legendary tales? Which are your favorites? and why?"

I think that a lot of Gamemasters try at some time or another to experiment with different game settings. Sure, it's exciting to run your players through a Greyhawk or a Forgotten Realms campaign, but at some point we all need a break from the norm.

At one time, several years ago, I decided to let some players roleplay a bunch of heroes in Valhalla. I ran them through a Norse-style campaign for several adventures and let them gain a few levels before I made sure that they all died to the last man. The last thing their characters heard were the wild cries of the Valkyries as they galloped out of the heavens. Of course, feeling a little mischievous, I left them all hanging at that point until the next gaming session. Needless to say, they were not happy campers at the end of that night.

However, the next week we resumed where we left off, and my players were pleasantly surprised to learn that they had been chosen by the Valkyries to go to Valhalla. Since they were so happy, I put them through an endless cycle of days of bloody battle and nights filled with singing, dancing, drinking, and wenching. After a couple of sessions of this, I brought about Ragnarok, the destruction of the world, and the players found themselves fighting at the sides of the gods for the fate of all mankind. I had the players fill a crucial role in the fate of the world and, as luck (or GM design) would have it, they managed to help save mankind. They also managed to save the life of Thor by aiding him in his battle with the Midgard Serpent.

By the end of this campaign, almost all of the player characters were very high level, and they were retired from play. As a matter of fact, they achieved almost demigod status, without the godlike powers, and were revered as heroes by mankind.

I RAN THEM THROUGH A NORSE-STYLE CAMPAIGN FOR SEVERAL ADVENTURES BEFORE I MADE SURE THAT THEY ALL DIED TO THE LAST MAN.

Getting away from the normal D&D world can be extremely enjoyable for both players and DMs. However, we did go back to a Forgotten Realms campaign after all was said and done. As much as I enjoyed trying to accurately run a Norse campaign for my players, I think that they much preferred an environment like the typical D&D world where magic is more prevalent. Running another historical campaign is something that I fully intend to do in the future though. I'm thinking that I'll probably do something in Ancient Greece or Rome.

Nathaniel Broyles
Rogers, CT

That Wacky Tolkien Guy

I just picked up Dragon #271 and immediately flipped to the "Forum" page (after reading the "Countdown to Third Edition," of course). I wholeheartedly agree with Rhian Hunt's statement that roleplayers are interested in topics besides game mechanics. In my opinion, interpretations of and adjustments to the mechanics should be more a matter of personal preference than a struggle to establish a single, universal doctrine.

While I agree with the spirit of Hunt's article, however, I take issue with its content. With all due respect to J.R.R. Tolkien, I think Rhian Hunt exaggerates Tolkien's contribution to the fundamental concepts of fantasy roleplaying. No artist or writer exists in a vacuum; all of them are, to some degree, the sum of their influences. Tolkien was no exception. He primarily drew his influences from Norse mythology and Northern European folklore, and he borrows several concepts from these traditions: elves, dwarves, broken magic swords that need to be mended, dragons with weak armor over the heart, birds giving advice to heroes, and magic rings a-plenty. However, as an educated man of the first half of the twentieth century, he could not have been ignorant of Greco-Roman myth or the Biblical tradition.

Hunt claims that the adventuring party is a "cheap knock-off" of Tolkien's Fellowship of the Ring. However, Frodo is not the first epic or literary hero to be accompanied by companions. Jason did not quest for the Golden Fleece alone; he brought a boatload of Argonauts with him. Hunt mocks the

Question of the Month

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE NEW D&D GAME, NOW THAT YOU'VE TRIED IT?

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Include your full name and mailing address. We'll withhold your name or print your full address if you wish.

adventuring party in which each member contributes to a broad range of skills. Yet each of the Argonauts had a special skill to contribute to the quest for the fleece. Without Orpheus's music, the crew of the Argo would have succumbed to the sirens' song. Without the winged sons of the North Wind, Tiresias the Seer would not have been saved from the harpies and thus could not have offered his valuable advice. Without Medea's magic on the return voyage, Talos the bronze giant would surely have killed all the Argonauts.

In Norse mythology, Thor did not encounter the giant king Utgard-Loki alone but was instead travelling with Loki and two human servants. There are examples outside of Western culture as well. In the Japanese fairy tale of Momotaro the Peach Boy, Momotaro is accompanied by a bird, a dog, and a monkey, each of which has a role to play in defeating a band of marauding ogres.

Hunt then claims that Tolkien invented the concept of the dungeon. I assume he means the accepted D&D definition of dungeon, which is an underground complex populated by monstrous adversaries and traps. This idea is also well established in older literature. Theseus did not fight the minotaur in an open field, but at the center of the Labyrinth, the mother of all mazes. The Labyrinth was not ludicrous—it was built as a maze to keep the minotaur in, not to keep invaders out. Many of Robert E. Howard's Conan stories, which predate The *Lord of the Rings* by almost three decades, feature dungeon crawls as well. It was pulp stories and serials of the same era that inspired the Indiana Jones films, along with their attendant dungeons.

Finally, Hunt gives Tolkien credit for the subraces of elves. Actually, there were both light elves and dark elves in Norse myth, known as "ljos alfar" and "svart alfar" respectively—and, yes, the dark elves did have black skin (not blue, as Hunt erroneously claims) and lived underground.

I do not deny the fact that Tolkien is likely responsible for the modern literary genre of fantasy fiction. I also accept that the existence of fantasy roleplaying can be greatly attributed to the influence of Tolkien's work. However, we should not forget the contribution of the ancients. As Hunt implied, Tolkien's works are part of a long tradition of epic myth and legend.

We should also not ignore the contribution of other authors to modern fantasy and roleplaying. Unfortunately, most fantasy fiction authors today seem more interested in producing inferior facsimiles of Tolkien's work than in trying anything innovative. They also forget the contributions of pioneers like Michael Moorcock, Ursula LeGuin, and Jack Vance to the fantasy genre. Be honest: Do most D&D campaigns reflect the epic literary grandeur of *Lord of the Rings* or the swashbuckling, money-grubbing, backstabbing heroes of Fritz Leiber and Steven Brust?

I am eagerly anticipating the release of 3rd Edition. The designers have shown, in their art and in several other areas, that they are willing to go beyond the standard Tolkien archetypes and give the DM free reign to create a campaign in his own image. Thumbs up to the men and women of the 3rd Edition design team.

Joe Giammarco
Stoney Creek, Ontario, Canada

Inspirations

The May Question of the month was pretty good. I have been playing the game now since it came out. I ran my first campaign in 1976, and boy was I clueless. I decided to use the preset campaign world of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* to help me get going—big mistake.

I tried to make the campaign fit into the constraints of the book, basically trying to recreate the tale I loved. My players hated it. Most of the encounters were with orcs, of course. The players got to the point where they wondered just how many orcs Sauron had. When I said he had as many as the "sands on the seashore," my nephew said he was going to keep track of the orcs he killed so there would be a few less.

The next time I tried to recreate any part of a world from a book was much later. I just found an old copy of *The Last Unicorn* and decided that it would be a really great campaign world. This time, rather than attempting to force the story, I used the characters to create a Ravenloft domain. I found that Haggard

I DECIDED TO USE THE PRESET CAMPAIGN WORLD OF TOLKIEN'S LORD OF THE RINGS... BIG MISTAKE.

PowerPlay

by Sean K Reynolds

MOVEMENT SPELLS + SPRING ATTACK

Any spell that allows you to move more than your normal distance each round boosts the utility of the Spring Attack feat. If your speed is 30 and you cast *expeditious retreat*, you can close a 30-foot distance to an opponent, make a melee attack, then move 30 feet away without drawing an attack of opportunity; if the opponent wishes to make a melee attack, he'll be unable to do anything but a regular attack action (as taking a move action means he can't choose the full attack option), in effect negating all of his iterative attacks. If your character has a 40-foot move, your opponent has to resort to a charge and might not be able to reach you at all (depending upon your position). *Fly* and *haste* allow similar effects, as does *jump*. Note that the *jump* spell's bonus to Jump skill checks means that your absolute minimum distance for a standing jump is 13 feet, making it easy to leap across a 10-foot diameter pit, attack an opponent, and leap back without provoking an attack of opportunity.

DAZE + ACTIONS PROVOKING AN ATTACK OF OPPORTUNITY

Not a spell-feat combo, but handy nonetheless, the simple *daze* cantrip is handy in that if successful, the target can't take any actions, including making attacks of opportunity, so many of the other "Power Play" combinations that rely upon a feat that negates an attack of opportunity for a combat action (such as Improved Bull Rush, Improved Trip, and so on) can be achieved without the need for the feat. Since the spell ends at the start of your next action, you'll have to have an ally perform the action after you cast the spell (unless you cast a quickened *daze* or—more efficient—extended *daze*).

made a wonderful dark lord. Throw in his son as Paladin, the old wizard, and the bumbling Shmendrick, and you have a great place for a party to adventure.

In over twenty years of playing and DMing, I found books to be an inspiration. They can help us create some really great story hooks, characters, and realms, but they can never replace the imagination and inspiration of the DM.

Rich Haton
Terre Haute, IN

Dead is Dead

At the behest of one of my players, I am writing in to share my opinions on the occurrence of raising and resurrecting spells in my campaign. I have been the DM for two campaigns over twelve years, and in that time, there have been no raisings or resurrections, in the strictest sense of the terms.

balance. I use the Hovering on Death's Door optional rule, and occasionally, just to prove that I'm not getting soft, I have killed off characters—usually after warning people ahead of time that the next episode will be a hairy one and that they have the option of not partaking.

Some people might be scared off or offended by this style, but my players love it. They enjoy it because I apply it to the villains as well, and my campaign has a plethora of individuals that everyone loves to hate. They also know that if a death occurred, it was because somebody was caught napping or because they were outmanned, outgunned, or outclassed. Simply put, I expect the best from my players, and they expect no less from me.

There is one spell that has been overlooked in the class of character saving magic; that is the *reincarnate* spell. This spell is 5th level in my campaign. If a player is willing to give up the appearance of his character, and to extensively rework his abilities in some instances, then that kind of loyalty is to be encouraged and rewarded. One of my players is currently playing a bard who began play as a half-elf and was reincarnated as a minotaur. My player was unsure of the new face on his old character at first, but now he loves it, and has actively refused and avoided opportunities to assume a less monstrous appearance.

There exist many ways of saving characters who have yet to live up to their full potentials without resorting to "character reboots." Reincarnate them, have them assume a form of undead or spiritual status, and make use of magic items. Use a method of holding up death, similar to Hovering on Death's Door, to give players a chance to think of something. You won't be disappointed.

Jim Castlebury
Carthage, IL

"I'VE GOT YOUR BACK, QUARION!"
As all elves can choose proficiency in the short bow for free, a 1st-level elf of any class with a 20 Dexterity and the Point Blank Shot feat has at least +6 to hit (+5 Dex, +1 feat) a group of enemies or +2 when firing into a mixed melee.

MIND LIKE A STEEL TRAP
A half-elf with an 18 Wisdom and the Iron Will feat has a +8 Will save (+4 Wis, +2 feat, +2 racial) against Enchantment effects and up to a +9 (+4 Wis, +4 ranks, +1 racial) on Listen and Spot checks.

NO CLASS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO HAVE MULTIPLE ATTACKS ASIDE FROM WARRIORS.

In my campaign, the *raise dead* and *resurrection* spells are effectively Quest spells. For that matter, *raise dead* doesn't even exist. If you earn a Quest spell, it should be the best of its kind, not a poor man's version of the same spell. My players have never encountered a set of circumstances in which they both earned the rights to such a reward and chose to use their reward in that matter.

I tell people when they first sit down at my gaming table that I do not believe in resurrection and that I adjust my DM style accordingly. That is to say, I am more forgiving on saving throws, ability checks, and in other circumstances where a character's life swings in the

"CRITICIZE MY SINGING, WILL YOU? TAKE THAT! AND THAT!"
A human bard with a 18 Dexterity, the Point Blank Shot feat, Precise Shot feat, three ranks in Perform, and a short bow can sit in the back rank while using inspire courage and fire into melee with a +6 to hit within 30 feet (+4 Dex, +1 feat, +1 morale) ... and it never hurts to use the *daze* cantrip on an opponent at the start of combat.

***GREASE* (+ WEB) + IMPROVED BULL RUSH**
While the *grease* spell can be cast on an area under an opponent, it's often more effective to push someone into an area that has already been affected by the spell. Cast *grease* behind an opponent and then bull rush them (with the Improved Bull Rush feat) to push them into the affected area. Although the *Player's Handbook* doesn't give strict rules for determining modifiers to a creature's save when it enters an area of *grease* at speed, increasing the DC by +4 isn't unreasonable (as a creature charging has "little chance" of escaping the effect). If the *grease* is in front of a pit, incline, or *web* spell, that opponent is out of the fight for a while.

Sorcerers Supreme

I fell in love with the sorcerer class as I read the details of it. Never having been a big fan of memorization and the like, I was excited by the prospect of being able to choose which spell to cast on the fly, as well as having an increased number of spells per day at low level. The idea of Charisma as a sorcerer's prime requisite and the early rationale for their existence was also very interesting.

My playtest experience as a player was quite lopsided: I mainly played single or multiclass sorcerers. I've played cleric/sorcerers, bard/sorcerers, and even a halfling barbarian/sorcerer. I've tasted the full fruits of sorcerous magic as a high level character and eeked out an existence as a low-level character with limited spells. I have even played a spellcaster with a decidedly sub-par Intelligence score.

When asked to describe my favorite part of the new edition, I do not even hesitate: It's the wily new spellflinger, the sorcerer.

John "Seanchai" Grose
Aurora, CO

SILENCE AND SILENT SPELL

If you know you're going to fight a spellcaster that day, prepare *silence* and several spells augmented by Silent Spell, then you can cast *silence* on yourself and wade into melee along with a fighter buddy against that spellcaster. Combat Casting also helps against those attacks of opportunity caused by casting in melee.

"NO! FIGHT ME, AND MY BADGER ARMY!"

A gnome druid with a 20 Con and the Toughness feat starts with 16 hit points and a +7 Fortitude save. With two badgers as her animal companions, she has two buddies that are good sentries (+5 Listen, +4 Spot) or combatants (3 attacks per round), she can *speak with animals* with them once per day, the *magic fang* spell makes them even more effective in a fight. In addition, the *goodberry* spell provides 2d4 points of temporarily portable healing without needing the Brew Potion feat (and therefore bypasses the XP and gp costs for potions).

KEEN EDGE + IMPROVED CRITICAL

The increased threat range for Improved Critical stacks with that of *keen edge*. On items that normally threaten on an 18-20 (like a rapier), that means the weapon threatens on a 12 or higher! Roguish weapons like the short sword radically improve their efficiency as sneak attack weapons. Because the spell lasts so long and affects 50 projectiles, a sorcerer or wizard could cast this and make lethal missile attacks from the rear of a group without worrying about melee combat.

Baffled and Bewildered

This letter is in response to Scott Wylie Roberts's letter in *Dragon Magazine* #272.

So many of Mr. Roberts's points were well founded that I was dismayed to read many of his personal opinions included in his mail. I think that the problem started with the fact that he uses 30+ pages of house rules on top of the multitude of preprinted materials, and that he already foresees that he'll need four or five pages of house rules when he converts to 3rd Edition, even though it hasn't been published yet. This made me wonder, at the beginning, if his letter would be entirely pessimistic. As it turned out, that was mostly the case.

I was curious about a few of the statements he made, and I had to ask some questions.

What do Jackie Chan movies have to do with monks, aside from martial arts?

How is it stupid for priests to be able to memorize spells yet still be able to swap them for curing spells of the same or lower levels? This is in no way a spell-point system, and it helps represent the inherent wisdom that the priest possesses. Thus, regardless of what the players stated spell choice was, it demonstrates that the priest had the foresight to be prepared to cure some wounds, poisons, and so on. Not only does it not over-emphasize the healing role, it gives the priest's player the opportunity to choose other, more versatile spells, while retaining the ability to help those in physical need, thereby making the priest a more valuable member of the adventuring party.

What makes gnomes and halflings uninteresting, unadventurous, pathetic, or unplayable? Please note that I did not disagree with "annoying," as a well-played halfling usually is.

It seems to me that Scott has never played in a campaign, or DMed one, in which a player played a "good" halfling or gnome. Many are the "stunties" that I've played or DMed that increased the enjoyment of the game. It's not about the race, but about the player.

As far as replacing them with goblins? Come on! Talk about annoying, unadventurous, and pathetic. The only thing that meets those qualities more than a goblin is a kobold.

I have played with those who chose drow PCs. I have played in Shadowdale. I have been in Forgotten Realms campaigns in which the DM made them his own and the players had no way of abusing what was in the books, as it was all subject to DM approval. None of this is symptomatic of a problematic campaign.

What struck me throughout the reading of Scott's letter was that all of the stated problems were player oriented and didn't have anything to do with the rules. Perhaps the game could be more enjoyable for him if he were to look beyond the books.

Although I disagree with his reason (that it would be too hard for him to coordinate), I have to agree that no class should be allowed to have multiple attacks aside from warriors. That is one of the abilities of fighters that set them aside from other classes. It represents their devotion to their martial skills, while the wizards devote their efforts to their minds, the priests to piety, and the rogues to manual dexterity. With few exceptions (war priests, for example) this should be the warrior's sole domain.

I wish Mr. Roberts good fortune in his future gaming endeavors. As long as the group is happy, the game is good.

Eric Wessels
child_of_light@netzero.net

AS LONG AS THE GROUP IS HAPPY, THE GAME IS GOOD.

"[illegible] SKILL, FREE WITH THE SELECTION OF ANY HUMAN."

With their 4 extra skill points and the Skill Focus feat at 1st level, human characters can effectively give themselves a free (compared to characters of other races) +6 base (+4 ranks, +2 feat) on any class skill.

IMBUE WITH SPELL ABILITY + ITEM CREATION FEATS

Sad that your wizard can't make healing potions, but not willing to pick up a level in cleric? If you have a cleric in your group, he can cast *imbue with spell ability* on you and grant you up to three cleric spells. You can use these spells with your item creation feats just as if they were arcane spells. This also means that if you and the cleric both have the Brew Potion feat, he can imbue you with curative spells and you can both make healing potions, doubling the number of healing potions you can make in a day—very handy when the upcoming dungeon is tough and you don't have much time. If the item takes more than one day to create, the cleric needs to cast *imbue with spell ability* each day the wizard is creating the item. Any items made with divine spells are divine items, so a *scroll of cure light wounds* made by a wizard is still a divine scroll and can be used only by divine spellcasters.

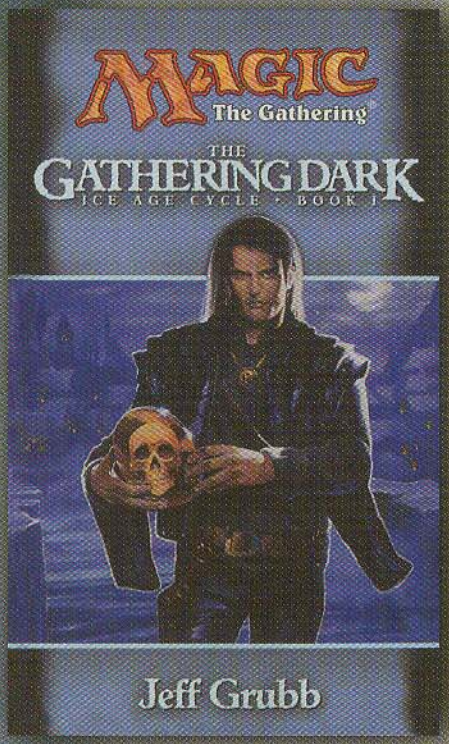
PC Portraits

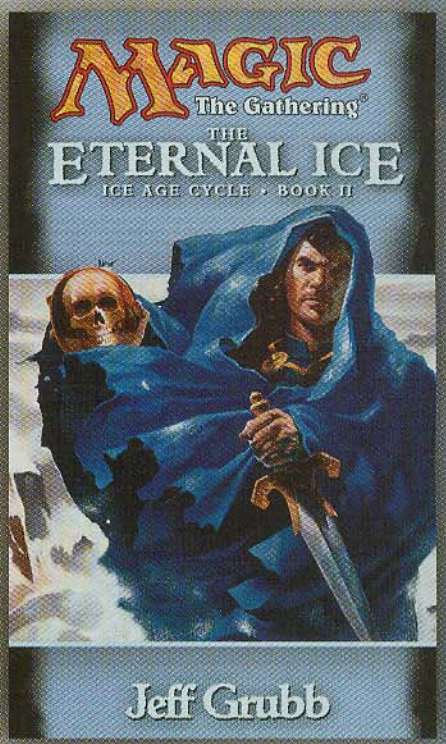
illustrated by Todd Lockwood and Sam Wood

"Third Edition is all about breaking old molds, so we attempted to come up with combinations of character races and classes that wouldn't have been possible or likely before. I was particularly tickled by the notion of a half-orc bard. But then, a half-orc as anything other than a fighter or barbarian tends toward humorous."

Todd Lockwood

The Cold Truth





Dominaria wasn't always filled with quick death and unseen peril. It used to be much worse.

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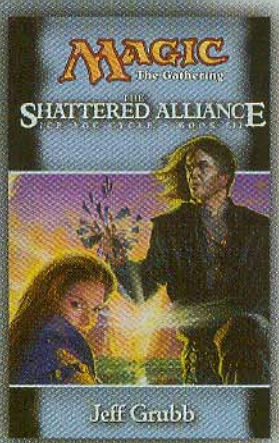

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Role Models

New D&D Minis, Incoming!

By Chris Pramas

Photos by Craig Cudnohufsky
Miniatures painted by Little Elves
Dioramas by Kim Graham

If you're any kind of D&D fan, you're mind is probably reeling. You've got a whole new *Player's Handbook* to assimilate, and now nothing is certain. Should you keep your old characters and translate them into the new edition, or start a new game with new characters? How does a sorcerer compare to a wizard? What the heck is an attack of opportunity?

Believe me, I understand. That's why I'm not going to do a rules heavy column this month. I'm going to give you a chance to digest everything that's new, and we can begin discussing how to best use minis in the new edition of the D&D game next issue.

This month I'd like to concentrate on the miniatures themselves. Coinciding with the release of the new D&D game, we have 24 new blisters of miniatures. These have been sculpted with the look, feel, and rules of the new game in mind.

What does this mean? Well, the sorcerer figure is armed with a spear, a simple weapon that even spellcasters can use. We've got an honest to Zen monk and newer, meaner versions of old enemies like the umber hulk and the beholder. You might also notice the celestial eagle and wonder why we chose this for the first release. Well, nearly any 1st-level spellslinger can cast *summon monster I* and receive the aid of a celestial eagle. As we release more miniatures, you'll find that they relate closely to the rules and adventures of D&D. Planning can be a wonderful thing.

When you see the new minis in stores, you'll note that many of them come in pieces. While we wish that we could bring you a single piece umber hulk, the realities of casting dictate otherwise. After a big figure is sculpted, we actually have to cut it up to make the molds. This is the only way to cast them, and it requires some clean up and gluing on your part.

But fear not, here is a simple guide on how to ready your models for play. Those blisters full of bits will turn into beautiful miniatures in no time.

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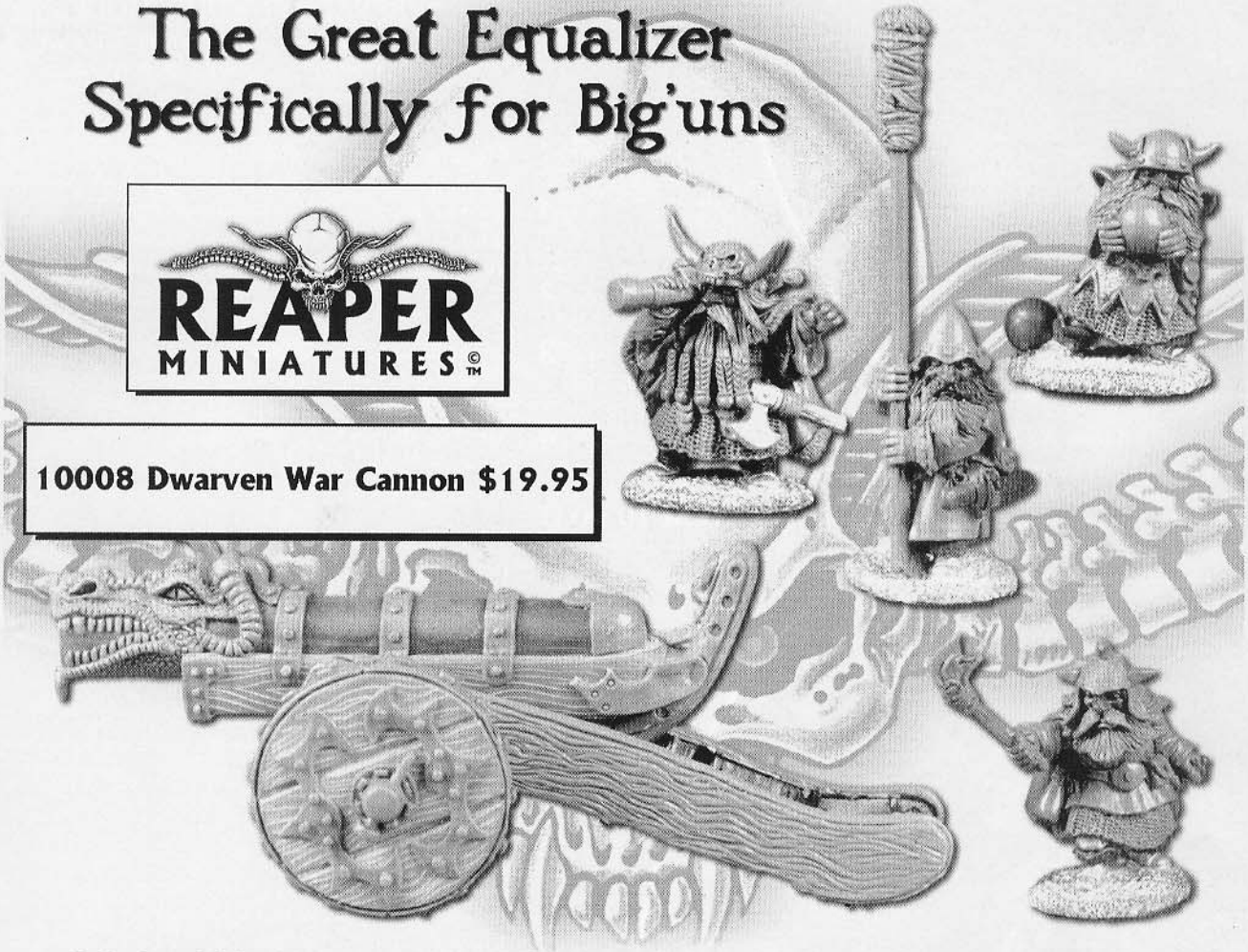

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HUMAN RANGER & ELF WIZARD

PREPARING YOUR MODELS

Some minis look great right out the blister, but even they can benefit from a few minutes of preparation.

If you've never done this before, don't worry. It's easy, and I'll guide you through the process up to the point of painting. Over the following months, I'll be providing some painting tips so you can make your minis look even better.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

1. A hobby knife, such as an EXACTO knife
2. A small file.
3. Superglue or 5 minute epoxy.
4. Spray primer.

HOW TO DO IT

With equipment at hand, you are ready to begin. You'll also want to lay down some newspaper to catch the metal bits and protect your table from glue spills.

REMOVE FLASH

Miniatures often have bits of excess metal hanging off of them. This is known as flash, and it's a by-product of the molding process. You'll want to remove it straight away, so take out your hobby knife and cut away any excess bits.

FILE AWAY PARTING LINES

Sometimes small ridges form where the two halves of the mold meet. These are known as parting lines, and you'll want to file these away. They are usually very fine lines, so it only takes a minute to take care of them. Be careful that you don't file off the detail of the figure though.

CHECK FITTING

Larger models especially often come in multiple pieces. Before you attempt to glue together the pieces of such a model, clean all the parts as instructed above. Then test fit the pieces to see if they fit snugly together. If they do not, file down the pieces until you have a better fit. For the glue to make a strong bond, you want to make sure the pieces have maximum contact.

ASSEMBLE MINIATURE

Once you've checked the fit, you can glue the pieces together. Many people use superglue because it dries very quickly. Others prefer 5 minute epoxy. This type of glue is more labor intensive, requiring you to hold the pieces together for 5 minutes. However, it creates a stronger bond and is recommended for larger miniatures.

Our new minis come with plastic bases, so you'll want to glue the figures into their bases as well. I recommend the 5 minute epoxy for this, since it fills up the slot in the base nicely. You also don't have to worry about holding the pieces together. Simply apply the glue, slide the figure's tab into the slot, and let it dry.

PRIMING

Now that your miniature is clean (and assembled, if applicable), you can apply an undercoat of primer. This undercoat provides a nice surface for the application of other paints and is recommended if you plan to paint your mini.

Primer comes in a variety of colors, though white and black are the most common. Use white if you plan to use bright colors on the miniatures and black if you want a more subdued look. Several brands of spray primer are available, and you should be able to find them at your local hobby retailer. It's also possible to hand prime your miniatures, but this takes longer.

Once you've finished priming your figure, you're ready to paint! D

WOLF FAMILIAR, ELF DRUID, AND HUMAN MONK

HUMAN BARBARIAN AND GNOME WIZARD

sage advice

by skip Williams

Need Some Help With Your Game?

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This month, the Sage considers your questions about the new edition of the D&D game.

How does a multiclassed character add skill points? All of the examples use single-classed characters. What happens when Leopold, a rogue with an Intelligence score of 14, switches to a fighter after 1st level? This would make Leopold a 1st-level fighter/1st-level rogue, right? Does he get 2 skill points for being a fighter, plus 2 points for Intelligence? Does he get 4 skill points for being a warrior-type character (as barbarians and rangers do)? Does he get quadruple skill points for being first level? And if Leopold is a human, does he get his +1 skill point for being human again? How do I determine how much a skill costs a multiclassed character, and how do I figure out a multiclassed character's maximum rank in a skill?

Leopold gets 2 skill points for gaining a fighter level, +2 skill points for his 14 Intelligence (and +1 point if Leopold is human).

You multiply a character's allotment of skill points by four only when the character chooses his initial set of skills at 1st level, as a 1st-level fighter/1st-level rogue, Leopold is a 2nd-level character.

When adding a class level, you always add the allotment of skill points for that class, as shown on Table 4-1 in the Player's Handbook, plus any adjustments for race and Intelligence scores. If Leopold had added a level of ranger or barbarian, he would have added 4 skill points for his class, plus 2 points for Intelligence (and 1 point if he's human).

When a multiclassed character gains skill points from a newly added class level, he must spend those skill points as if he were any other member of that class. For example, if Leopold adds a fighter level, he purchases ranks in the Hide skill as a cross-class skill, and he can't purchase any ranks in Use Magic Device (because that skill is exclusive to rogues, and Leopold is buying skills as a fighter). Leopold can, however, purchase Handle Animal as a class skill, even though it was a cross-class skill for him as a rogue.

A skill's maximum rank depends on a multiclassed character's character level (not on his level in any particular class). If a skill is a class skill for at least one of the character's classes, the character maximum rank in the skill is his character level + 3; if a skill is not a class skill for any of the character's classes, the maximum rank is half that.

I have a multiclassed dwarf who is a 6th-level fighter and a 1st-level rogue. I want to pick up a level of cleric. Am I correct in thinking that my character doesn't incur any XP penalties because fighter is her favored class and her other two classes are within a level of each other?

Yes, you are correct. The levels a character has in a favored class don't count when determining if the character suffers an XP penalty for multiclassing.

WHY DO HALF-ORCS SUFFER A NET PENALTY OF –2 TO THEIR INITIAL ABILITY ROLLS?

Why do half-orcs suffer a net penalty of -2 to their initial ability rolls?

You refer, I presume, to the half-orc's racial ability adjustments of +2 Strength, -2 Intelligence, and -2 Charisma. (Those numbers do indeed add up to a net total of -2). The game's designers decided that a +2 bonus to Strength more than outweighs the -2

penalty to Intelligence and Charisma, especially considering the half-orc's 60-foot darkvision and favored class of barbarian. Numbers alone don't always tell the whole story.

Is the refocus action intended for the next combat round only? Do you reroll initiative the next round? I can see this being abused by most all characters who do not gain a very good initiative for the combat session: They can refocus and possibly win initiative for the rest of the combat.

When you refocus, you spend your entire round refocusing. You cannot act or move (not even a 5-foot step). You do not reroll initiative next round; your initiative is treated as though you've rolled a 20 on your initiative check. Though many people seem to think refocus is great option, it's seldom—if ever—worth doing. (See the next question.)

What's the use of the refocus action when you can ready an action and go at the highest person's initiative?

If you ready an action and then act when a person with a higher initiative acts, you're effectively giving up your action so you can go earlier in a later round, which is pretty much the same as refocusing. In some rare instances, refocus could be better, because it can set your initiative number even higher than the highest other initiative, and that could be an advantage if new foes enter the fight. Also, you can only ready a partial action. If you refocus, you can make a full attack at your new initiative. If you ready an attack, you get to make a single attack only when it's finally your turn. In general, you're right, though. Refocus is mostly a "feel good" option, as in: "I've refocused—now look at what a great initiative number I have!"

WHAT'S THE USE OF THE REFOCUS ACTION?

In the D&D game's cyclical initiative system, it's almost always to your advantage to act as soon as you can, and refocus actually delays your action by forcing it into the next round. Using delay or ready is just about always smarter than refocusing. About the only time refocus isn't a foolish thing to do is when you've got absolutely nothing useful to do anyway.

The 2nd-Edition D&D game had a rule that allowed characters with multiple attacks to attack before foes who were entitled only to single attacks, but the rule also made them wait to make the second and later attacks until their foes had acted at least once. The full attack action seems to break that rule. Does it?

Yes, it does. If you choose the full attack action, you make all your attacks during your turn, no matter how many attacks you have or what your position in the initiative order is. Your multiple attacks do not change your initiative number.

Note that full attack does not allow a move (except for a 5-foot step), which means that a character with a high initiative number can usually not use it until the second round of a combat, when she has moved into position.

HOW CAN I GET AWAY FROM SOMEONE WITHOUT PROVOKING AN ATTACK OF OPPORTUNITY?

How can I get away from someone without provoking an attack of opportunity?

Once you factor in the effects of skills and spells, the game offers a plethora of ways to escape a foe unharmed. Even if you don't have a spell or skill to get you out of trouble, you can disengage from an opponent and not provoke an attack of opportunity just by moving. If all you do during your turn is move (not run), the space you start in (generally considered a 5-foot square) is not considered threatened and nobody can get attacks of opportunity against you. If you later move through another threatened area, however, you *are* subject to attacks of opportunity. (If your opponent has reach, you can forget about getting away without drawing an attack of opportunity.)

Even if you take advantage of this rule, you'll need to have a better movement rate than your opponent or move someplace where your opponent can't follow to get away clean.

If I want to disrupt someone's spell, do I have to deal damage on the same initiative number as the caster (by using a readied action), or can I disrupt the spell by dealing damage to the enemy spellcaster anytime during the round before the spell is cast?

Damage a spellcaster takes before his turn doesn't affect his spellcasting unless the damage came in the form of a continuing effect, such as from *Melf's acid arrow*. (See the "Concentration" section of Chapter 10 in the Player's Handbook and the description of the Concentration skill in Chapter 4.) Note that there's nothing special about the point in time that happens to be the start of a round. You can disrupt a spellcaster with *Melf's acid arrow* even if you hit him with it last round. You don't have to hit the spellcaster with it "before" his turn on the round he's being disrupted.

You can use a readied action to try to disrupt the spellcaster, but you might not need to. Spellcasting provokes an attack of opportunity unless the spellcaster successfully casts on the defensive. (See the "Magic Actions" section of Chapter 8.) Perhaps the best way to disrupt an opponent's spells is to grapple him, preventing him from casting spells with somatic components or material components he didn't already have in hand.

My wizard cast a spell in combat and drew an attack of opportunity. The attack missed. Does my wizard still have to make a Concentration check to cast the spell?

No, the attack of opportunity must deal damage to force a Concentration check. Damage that is completely negated by a special defense, such as damage reduction or energy resistance, does not cause a Concentration check. If a special defense only partially negates damage, only the damage that actually gets through to the target contributes to a Concentration check's DC.

PowerPlay
by Sean K Reynolds

If I'm fighting with two weapons and I have multiple attacks (say, two at +6/+1), do I then have three attacks per round, or do I use the second weapon for the +1 attack? How do I calculate the bonuses (assuming I don't have Ambidexterity or Two-weapon Fighting)? Do I use the +6 or the +1 for calculating the penalty for the additional attack?

A second weapon gives you one extra attack each round at your best attack bonus. You make your normal number of attacks with your primary hand and one attack with your other hand. When you use an extra weapon, however, all the attacks you make suffer a penalty. If you don't have the Two-Weapon Fighting or Ambidexterity feats and you're not using a light weapon in your off hand, all the attacks you make with your primary hand suffer a -6 penalty, and the attack you make with your other hand suffers a -10 penalty. Assuming no other bonuses, the character in your example would make two attacks with her primary hand at +0/-5 and one attack with her off hand at -4.

If you use a light weapon in your other hand, the attack penalties are slightly lower. See Table 8-2 in the Player's Handbook (and the text accompanying it) for details.

Is a natural 20 always a hit and natural 1 always a miss when attacking? Is a natural 20 always a success and natural 1 always a failure when rolling a saving throw, an ability check, or a skill check?

On an attack, a roll of 20 on the die is always a success and a roll of 1 is always a failure. This represents the inherently chancy nature of combat, and the innumerable variables that are completely beyond the character's control. In the case of attack rolls, common sense prevails. A roll of 20 can't produce a hit when a hit isn't possible (such as when a target is beyond a melee attack's reach or a ranged attack's maximum range). Some circumstances always produce a hit or a miss no matter what the attack roll is. For example, an attack against a concealed target has a flat chance to miss (see Table 8-10 in the Player's Handbook), no matter what the attack roll is. Likewise if you perform a coup de grace or take a full round to line up a melee attack on an unattended object, you always hit.

Saving throws are similar to attack rolls in that there's always a little something beyond the character's control. Like combat, there are cases where the roll is irrelevant, even if it's a 1 or 20. Creatures that are immune to an attack form never have to roll saving throws against that attack. Likewise, if a spell or attack form doesn't allow a saving throw in the first place, you can't roll a saving throw and hope to get a 20.

***BLESS WEAPON* + IMPROVED CRITICAL**

Using the feat with a weapon under the influence of this spell doubles the frequency of its critical hits against evil foes (since every threat is automatically a critical hit). Since the spell affects any weapon, it can be cast on weapons wielded by non-paladins. Although it's only available to paladins of 14th level and higher, the spell works on a magic weapon (as long as the weapon doesn't already have a critical-related magical effect), so its effects can stack with any abilities your high-level character's weapon has.

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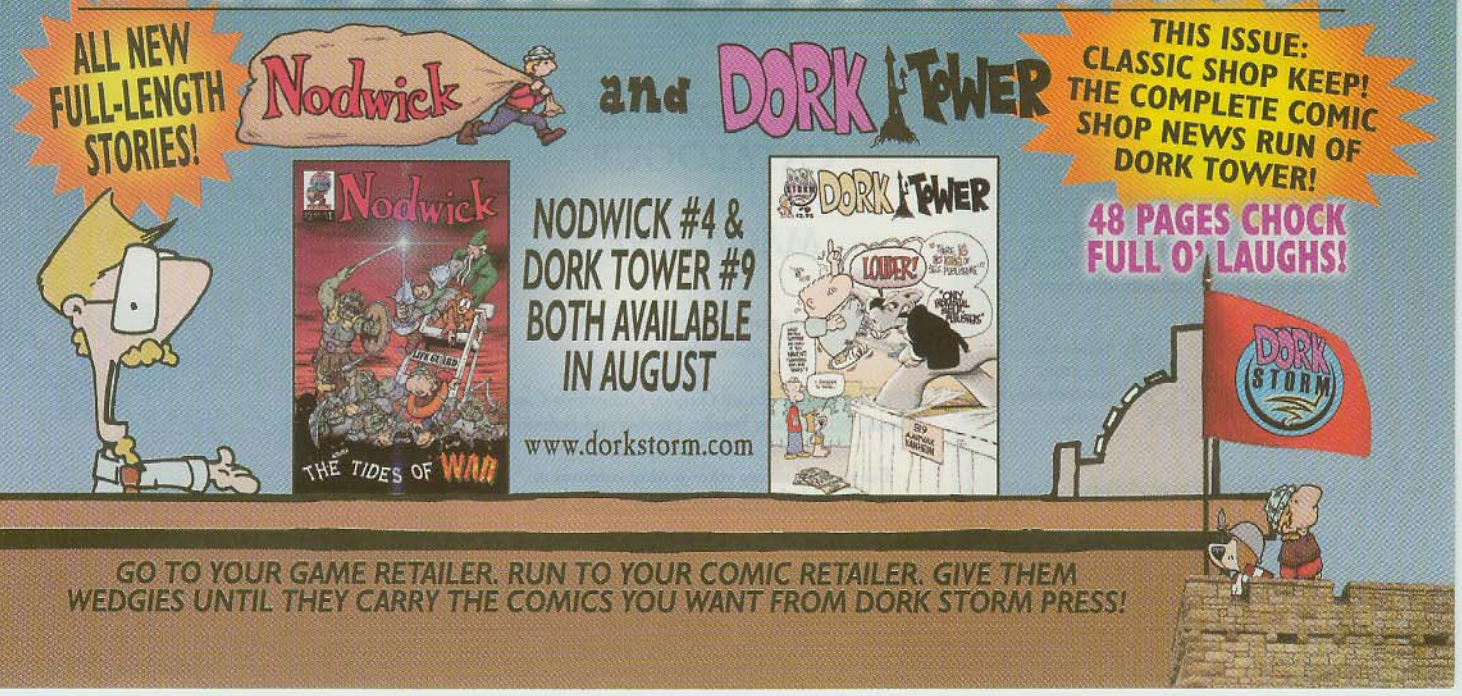
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IS IT POSSIBLE TO USE A SPELL SUCH AS DETECT MAGIC OR DETECT EVIL TO DETECT AN INVISIBLE FOE?

Skill checks are not subject to automatic success or failure. Some tasks are just too easy for failure or too hard for success. (Most people don't fail once on every 20 attempts to tie their shoes.)

Ability checks are likewise not subject to automatic failure or success. (No matter how lucky you are, you're just not going to kick down a castle wall.) If the DM feels that chance might affect the outcome, a saving throw or an attack roll is probably more appropriate.

We've noticed a number of instances in which you can divide a number and round the quotient up or down, but the rules don't say what to do. Is there a general rule that we've overlooked?

Indeed there is. You'll find it on the first page of the appendix (page 275) in the Player's Handbook. Always round a fraction down (even if it is bigger than one half) unless the rules specifically tell you to round up.

Since an Empowered spell affects half again as many targets as its normal version, why doesn't a 5th-level wizard's Empowered magic missile fire off more than three missiles?

It doesn't fire more missiles because the Empower Spell feat increases a spell's variable, numeric effects. In the case of magic missile, that's the spell's damage, not the number of missiles. A spell such as sleep, on the other hand, affects a variable number of targets (2d4 HD worth of creatures). An Empowered sleep spell affects 2d4 × 1.5 HD worth of creatures.

Is it possible to use a spell such as detect magic or detect evil to detect an invisible foe?

Yes, but not efficiently. Let's say a character uses a detect magic spell, though the following example applies to any detection spell. The spell reveals nothing about the invisible opponent unless the character happens to aim the spell at the area containing his foe. If the enemy is using an invisibility spell, a spell-like invisibility power, or a supernatural invisibility power, the detect magic spell merely reveals that there is magic somewhere in the area. The detect magic caster has no idea where the magical aura is, what sort of creature or object bears the aura, or whether the aura is in motion.

One round later, the detect magic user can search for magical auras

THE WORLD'S FASTEST HALFLING

A halfling with 20 Dexterity and 4 ranks in Jump and Tumble has +9 on Tumble checks (+5 Dex, +4 ranks) to move around opponents without drawing attacks of opportunity. At 2nd level, she can add 1 rank to each of those skills, increasing that bonus to +12 (+5 Dex, +5 ranks, +2 synergy), and improves her AC when using the fighting defensively or full defense actions.

Gamer's Guide

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again. If the user manages to aim the spell at the invisible foe once more, the detect magic spell reveals the number of magical auras on the foe and the strength of the strongest aura (because the user has scanned the same subject for 2 consecutive rounds). The detect magic user still has no idea exactly where the foe is, what the foe is like, or whether the foe is moving.

After another round goes by, the detect magic user can scan for magical auras once again. If the user is lucky enough to catch the invisible foe for a third time, she will have scanned the same subject for 3 consecutive rounds. The detect magic spell now reveals the strength and location of each aura. The detect magic user still does not "see" the foe and does not know whether the target is moving. (She knows only the strength and locations of magical auras during her turn in the initiative order.) In this case, a "location" is the 5-foot square that contains the aura. If the creature or item bearing the aura takes up more than one square, the detect magic user can get some idea of its size. (See "Big and Little Creatures in Combat" in Chapter 8 of the Player's Handbook.) It is possible for the detect magic user to attack the location of one of the auras the spell has revealed. If the spell revealed auras in different locations, the detect magic user still might not choose the right location to attack. Even if she does, the foe has total concealment, and the attack has a 50% chance to miss no matter what the attack roll is.

Remember that all of the foregoing depends on the detect magic spell user scanning the invisible foe for 3 consecutive rounds. If the detect magic user guesses incorrectly about where to scan even once, she'll have to start the process of zeroing in on her invisible opponent all over again.

Use a similar procedure when a character tries to locate an invisible creature with any other "detect" spell.

Can I use spell immunity to make myself immune to the detect magic spell? How about other spells such as see invisibility or dispel magic?
No. Spell immunity gives the subject an unbeatable spell resistance versus the specified spell. Since none of these spells are subject to spell resistance, spell immunity is useless against them.

Can characters choose "unarmed strike" as the focus of the Improved Critical feat?
Yes. An unarmed strike or another natural weapon is a "weapon" for purposes of the Improved Critical feat (and for most other purposes).

If you go from a medium load to a heavy load, your movement doesn't change. Why is this? Everything else changes.

CAN I USE SPELL IMMUNITY TO MAKE MYSELF IMMUNE TO THE DETECT MAGIC SPELL?

A really heavy load just doesn't affect your speed that much. It affects your ability to accelerate, maneuver, or stop, which is why a heavily loaded creature's maximum Dexterity bonus goes down, and its skill check penalty goes up. Essentially, the creature can lumber along at a pretty good clip once it gets going, but has a hard time keeping its balance or making sudden moves.

Do magic weapons have to be masterwork weapons first? If so, why don't the masterwork and magic bonuses stack?
Yes, you have to have a masterwork weapon before you can enchant it. Masterwork and enhancement bonuses don't stack because they're the same basic type of bonus (an enhancement bonus): They both make a weapon more effective.

Can a normal weapon be used for awhile, then be made into a masterwork weapon?
No. If a weapon is not created as a masterwork weapon, it will never be one. I suppose a used weapon could be melted down to provide materials for a new masterwork weapon, though. The resulting masterwork weapon would not be any cheaper to make.

At what spellcaster level do potions, wands, and the like operate?
At whatever caster level the character who made the item decided to set the level. An item's caster level can be no higher than its creator's level at the time the item was made, and no lower than the minimum level required to cast the spell effect the item generates or the spell used to create the item.

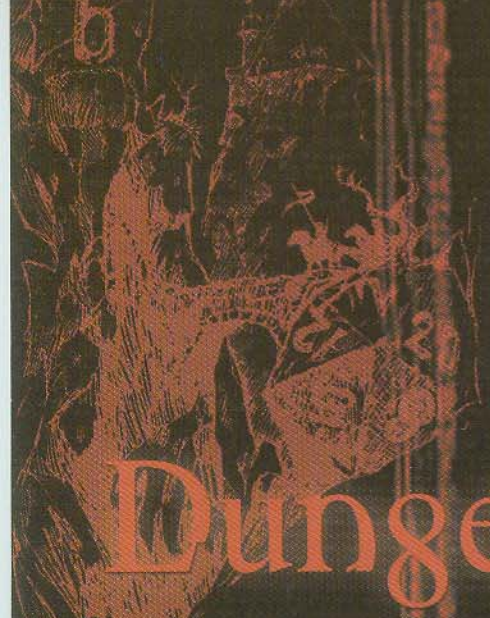
The DUNGEON MASTER's Guide, which will be released in September, has default caster levels for magic items. Until then, just assume that an item's caster level is the minimum required to cast the effect the item generates. For example, casting fireball requires a 5th-level wizard, so a wand of fireball casts the spell at 5th level. Note that the 2nd Edition AD&D game used preset caster levels for all magic items. If you're converting from that set of rules to the new rules, use the old caster levels. Those caster levels are as follows: wand 6th-level; staff 8th-level; potion 12th-level; other item 12th-level; artifact DM's discretion, but usually 20th-level.

We're confused as to which skills you can take 10 and take 20 on. Can we take 10 or take 20 on a Hide check, for example?
Taking 10 is a way to eliminate chance from a skill check; you can take 10 pretty much anytime you're using a skill and there are no distractions.

Taking 20 represents using a skill over and over again until you succeed. (That's why taking 20 uses up so much time.) You can't take 20 if there's a consequence for failure. Since failing a Hide check means you've been spotted, you can't take 20 on a Hide check. In general, you can't take 20 on any check that is resolved with an opposed roll.

It might be possible to take 10 on a Hide check. For example, suppose a sentry looks around for a suitable place to hide at the beginning of his watch and then settles in. Since the sentry is not trying to hide from anyone in particular, the DM might very well allow the sentry to take 10 on the Hide check. D

"I LOVE THE TASTE OF HEMLOCK IN THE MORNING."
A dwarf with 20 Constitution, the Great Fortitude feat, and a class with good Fortitude saves has a +9 bonus in that category and +11 against poison or spells.



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Dungeoncraft

by Ray Winninger

Last month, we started to examine what it takes to run a D&D game session and got as far as the three basic skills that cover the lion's share of the DM's responsibilities—providing effective descriptions, resolving actions, and deciding how and when to reveal information. This month, let's conclude the examination with looks at two new and equally important topics—characterization and time keeping.

Your Game's Voice

The DM spends the bulk of any session describing the action. As DM, you must describe locations, events, actions, and characters. Properly describing this last category is particularly challenging. Before you even begin, you face an important decision that's likely to set the tenor of your entire campaign. To describe a character completely, you must describe not only that character's physical appearance but also what the character says and does. Sometimes, you must even describe how the character feels. Most DMs convey this information in one of two ways, which are best illustrated by example.

Method One

DM You see a town guardsman on the road up ahead. He's asking you to come over, and he seems friendly.

PC All right. I approach the guardsman. What does he want?

DM He asks if you've seen any suspicious individuals out on the road this evening. Apparently, a merchant caravan was waylaid a couple of hours ago, and he's looking for the perpetrator. Something about the way he's asking, though, suggests that he's not telling you everything he knows about the incident.

Method Two

DM "You see a town guardsman on the road up ahead."
(in a booming voice, as the guard) "Hello, my good fellow! Might I have a word with you?"

PC (hesitant) "Hello, my friend. Is something wrong?"

DM (as guardsman) "Oh, no! No, sir. I was just hoping to ask you and your friends here if you might have seen anyone ... well, suspicious out on the road this afternoon."

PC "Suspicious? In what way."

DM "Hmm ... I suppose you might say, well ... let's just say suspicious."

These two opposing play styles neatly define and divide Dungeon Masters in the same way that "right handed" and "left handed" define and divide major league pitchers. When all else is equal, neither style is "correct" or superior to the other, but most players respond better to one style or the other. Similarly, it's usually difficult for a DM inclined toward the first style to run a game using the second, or vice versa. Since the style you choose—or, perhaps, the style that chooses you—has a profound impact upon the sort of games you'll run, it's important to understand all of the advantages and drawbacks of each method.

Third-Person Play

The first method is usually known as third person, a term you might remember from English class. In this case, the DM and players narrate the action in a neutral voice and refer to the various characters they play in the third person—just like Bob Dole used to refer to himself in his campaign speeches. In other words, if you're temporarily taking on the role of an orc and you want to insult one of the player heroes and threaten him with death, you might say, "The lead orc walks up to you and threatens you with death." Games run in a third-person style tend to place more focus on plot and less on characterization. In other words, after you've played in such a game for a while, you're more likely to remember the epic sagas that unfolded rather than the colorful characters that have emerged.

One of the real advantages of a third-person game is that such a style makes it considerably easier for shy players to participate fully in the action. Some players find it difficult to get a little silly, and the third person allows them to maintain a certain comfortable distance. Third-person games also tend to move faster than their counterparts because lengthy, intricate conversations are often summarized into a series of quick conversations. This is one of the characteristics of a third-person game that tends to result

answer: DISPATER (DISPATCHER).

in an emphasis on plot, since a faster pace tends to mean that more things can happen during each session.

One of the myths about third-person gaming is that such a style makes it impossible for the players to create interesting characters. In fact, the third person sometimes allows you to easily convey certain subtleties that are difficult to get across in any other way. For instance, you might accept an invitation to lead a war party into enemy territory by saying, "I'll accept the king's offer. As I leave his chamber, though, the look in my eye clearly indicates that I do not relish the prospect of more bloodshed." Getting this point across using another technique might be much harder. In fact, this example nicely illustrates that the most interesting sort of characterization that emerges from third-person games tends to illustrate the deeper psychology of the characters involved in place of their simple mannerisms. It's often a bit harder to firmly create a character in the imagination of the players using such a method, but it's certainly possible.

First-Person Play

The second method illustrated in the earlier examples is usually known as first person. In a first-person game, the DM and the players temporarily become the characters they are playing. At a minimum, this means that the players speak their dialogue exactly as their characters would say the lines. In other words, instead of "I walk up to the guard and ask him what's causing that commotion on the other side of town," you might say, "Friend guard! What exactly is causing all the unrest on the far side of the bridge?" In most first-person games, though, the players go one step further and speak in funny voices or use other mannerisms to better convey their characters. A fighter might speak in bold, confident tones, while a wise old wizard might scratch his chin a lot and quietly reflect before speaking. In other words, the players almost go so far as to act out their roles as though the game is a very special sort of stage play.

The chief advantage of the first person style is that it allows the players to easily convey their characters' basic mannerisms and attitudes. Players who are skilled in this style can very quickly create an impression of their characters in the imagination of the remaining participants, making it very easy for everyone to distinguish one character from another. Since the players who like this sort of thing tend to ham it up a bit, though, first-person games almost always progress more slowly than their third-person counterparts. In fact, it's quite easy for an accomplished group of first-person gamers to spend an entire session re-enacting a suitably social encounter, like a grand banquet or a ball. Of course, such delays aren't necessarily a bad thing at all. Even though it's entirely possible that no dice will ever hit the table and little "plot" will be resolved, these experiences can be a lot of fun, and they tend to help the players add depth and interest to their characters. The fact that such sessions don't require a lot of preparation on the part of the already beleaguered DM doesn't hurt either!

One of the big drawbacks to the first-person approach is the amount of stress it places upon the DM. After all, it's fairly easy for each player to invent a character voice or an interesting mannerism for his or her character, but the Dungeon Master often takes on the roles of several different characters each session! To keep things running properly, the DM must be a wellspring of funny voices and unique characterizations. Some DMs relish this challenge and enjoy the opportunity to grab the spotlight. Others quickly fall into a rut and use the same voices over and over again. Fortunately, most DMs who are drawn to the first person style are natural hams and it tends to take a while before repetition starts to become a real problem.

Again, the most important thing to understand at this point is that neither style is superior to the other. Don't try to force yourself to adopt a style that seems uncomfortable. Employ whatever style comes most naturally and try to take maximum advantage of its strengths while playing down its weaknesses. If you are inclined toward third person, this means preparing more plot for each session (due to the faster pace) and giving some thought to the deeper psychology of your NPCs. If you are inclined toward first person, it means designing encounters with plenty of opportunities for conversation and working out fresh voices and mannerisms for your NPCs.

WHAT'S YOUR STYLE?

Third Person	vs.	First Person
Describe your dialogue		Speak your dialogue
Favors plot		Favors character
Comfortable for shy players		More roleplaying freedom
Faster action		Deeper interaction

Timing

One of your most important duties as Dungeon Master is keeping an accurate account of time as it elapses in the fictional game world. In other words, you should always know how long it takes the characters in the game world to resolve the actions they are currently

PowerPlay

by Sean K Reynolds

WHIP + *ANIMATE ROPE* + IMPROVED TRIP

Casting *animate rope* on a whip allows you to use it to enwrap foes (as the spell describes) without having to throw the weapon away. This means you get any attack bonuses from the whip (Weapon Focus or any sort of attack bonus on the weapon, such as from *magic weapon*) instead of just using a ranged touch attack, although you still have to let go of the whip when you attack in order to allow it to try to enwrap the target. (If the creature fails its save, it is enwrapped.) If you have the Improved Trip feat, a successful trip attack (including the enwrap effect of the spell) with your whip means you can take a 5-foot step and make a melee attack on your tripped foe. Of course, this last option usually requires you to have a weapon in your other hand or the Quick Draw feat, as drawing a weapon is a move-equivalent action.

A simple way to track game time is to mark off ten minutes (T), hours (H), and days (D) on a notepad.

makeshift shelter out of tree branches?

Tracking Time

Keeping an accurate account of the passage of time is important for a number of reasons. Inaccurate timing makes it difficult to gauge your responses to the players' actions and unfold whatever plots you have devised. Suppose you've decided that the players' stronghold has attracted the attention of a local burglar who plans to sneak in on the night of the next new moon. On the evening in question, the players happen to be returning from a dungeon when they decide to stop on their way home to ask a local sage to identify some treasure. Does the thief arrive at the stronghold before or after the players return? Obviously, the answer to this question will have an enormous impact upon how you decide to deal with the situation. This example is rather simplistic to help illustrate the point, but during the typical game session you're bound to encounter this dilemma in numerous and subtler guises.

Accurate timing is also crucial to resolving many situations arising directly from the rules. Suppose a wizard casts a *sleep* spell on an ogre. How much farther into the dungeon can the party go before the ogre wakes up and comes looking for them? Similarly, imagine an army of enemy soldiers advancing on the adventurers' stronghold. How many spells can the players' wizards manage to prepare before the army arrives and the battle begins? These are crucial questions, and you'll need to arrive at clear, consistent answers.

The good news is that keeping track of time is one of the DM's easier responsibilities. Try to get in the habit of maintaining a special scratch pad used just for time keeping, and make sure this pad is always handy. I like to mark a "D" on the pad for each day that elapses, an "H" for each hour, a "T" for each ten minutes, an "M" for each minute, and a check mark for each melee round (10 rounds make 1 minute). In other words, if the adventurers make a two-day trek to the nearest town for supplies, I mark "DD" on my timing sheet. If they pause for a meal as soon as they enter the town, I might decide that the meal takes about an hour and a half and I'll mark HTTT (1 hour and 30 minutes) on the sheet. Once I've marked down enough 10 minutes to equal an hour or enough hours to equal a day, I'll cross out those markings and replace them as appropriate. In other words, when I reach six Ts (for 60 minutes), I cross them out and replace them with an H (for a single hour). This system allows me to quickly compute the current day and time in the game world, which in turn allows me to time my plots and events accurately.

ONE OF THE DM'S IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITIES IS KEEPING THE GAME MOVING AT A BRISK PACE IN ORDER TO KEEP THE PLAYERS INTERESTED.

Pacing

Closely related to the importance of accurate timekeeping is the concept of pacing. Another of the DM's many important responsibilities is keeping the events of the game moving at a brisk pace in order to keep the players interested. Getting bogged down in details undertaking. Sometimes the game rules will help you calculate these durations. The rules tell you, for instance, how long it takes a given character to walk from one end of the dungeon to another, or how long it takes a wizard to prepare her spells. Often, though, you must judge the timing of an action with only your common sense and real-world references to guide you. Suppose, for example, that the players decide to hire some laborers to dig a gold mine. How long will it take to sink the mine and start extracting ore? A month? A year? How long should it take to hunt for game or assemble a

TOUCH ATTACK SPELLS + IMPROVED UNARMED STRIKE (+ STUNNING FIST)

Trying to punch someone for damage while using a touch attack spell is harder than just making the touch attack, since doing so still provokes an attack of opportunity—unless you have the Improved Unarmed Strike feat. With the feat, you get to attack with the spell, inflict punching damage, and don't suffer an attack of opportunity. This is especially good with *chill touch* (which you can use multiple times per casting), inflict wound spells against the living or cure wound spells against undead (where you'll be inflicting two kinds of damage), *shocking grasp* (where you get an additional bonus to hit metal-armored targets), and *vampiric touch* (where you heal yourself when you hit). If you have Stunning Fist, you can include a stun attempt in addition to punching damage and the spell effect.

Catch up on past installments of Dungeoncraft at http://www.wizards.com/dragon/Welcome.asp

CAT'S GRACE + WEAPON FINESSE (+ POWER ATTACK)

A character fighting with Weapon Finesse is better off receiving a *cat's grace* spell than a *bull's strength*, for most characters of this type have more Dexterity-related skills and abilities. If the character is strong enough to have Power Attack, he can subtract the additional plusses provided by *cat's grace* from his base attack and add them to damage instead.

or describing each individual tree the players pass during a long cross-country journey is a quick route to boredom. We touched upon the DM's ability to arbitrarily speed up play in last month's discussion of effective descriptions. It's important to recognize, though, that there are also situations in which it makes sense to slow down the passage of time to emphasize important actions. Fortunately, this concept is built directly into the D&D game rules. Under normal circumstances, game play proceeds in a free-form fashion, with the players announcing their actions somewhat haphazardly and the DM resolving those actions and passing whatever time he feels appropriate. Once combat starts, though, the game becomes more formalized, the players begin announcing their intentions in strict turn order, and all actions are restricted to durations of 6-second rounds to make sure that nobody accomplishes too much before others have an opportunity to react. In essence, combats take a disproportionately greater amount of real time to resolve than most other game situations, drawing additional attention to them and heightening the suspense that arises from them.

Although the D&D game calls for the use of formalized melee rounds and initiative scores only to resolve combat, you should feel free to employ these rules whenever you'd like to slow down play for effect, whether or not the players are embroiled in a fight. It might make sense to use combat rounds while the players cross a rickety bridge suspended high over a valley. Asking each player to take formal turns describing his actions as he crosses the bridge not only increases the drama of the encounter but also helps you decide who has an opportunity to react should someone stumble.

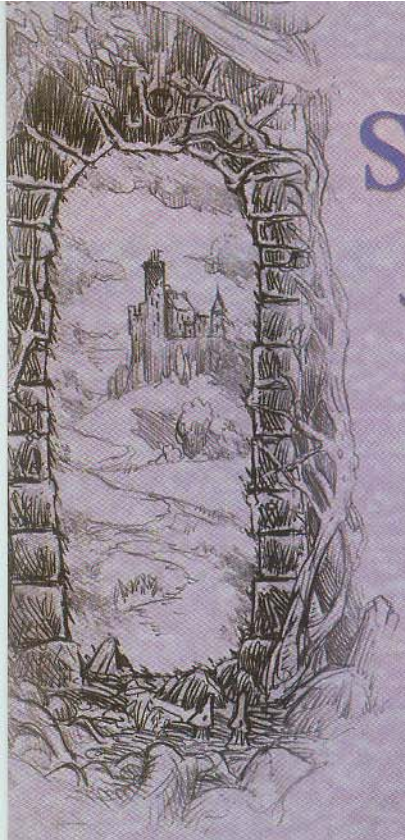
TAKING FORMAL TURNS (ROUNDS) INCREASES THE DRAMA AND HELPS RESOLVE CRISES LOGICALLY.

That wraps up another installment. Next month, try the "Dungeoncraft" Pop Quiz to see what you've learned so far. Time to pull out your back issues and start brushing up! D

DARKNESS + BLIND-FIGHT

If you're ever in a situation where your attacks are hampered because of sight conditions, whether it's because you have been blinded, your opponent is invisible or displaced or using *mirror image*, you're fighting a creature with a gaze attack, or you're in normal darkness fighting creatures with darkvision, the *darkness* spell puts you on equal terms (nobody can see), and having the Blind-Fight feat tilts it back in your favor. With the feat, your concealment miss chance effectively drops to 25% (it's 50% normally), so you are only half as likely to miss due to concealment as your opponents. Note that this is an effective tactic even against someone using the *blur* spell, for although your concealment miss chance increases from 20% to 25%, their concealment miss chance increases from 0% to 50%.

The Unspeakable Oaf by John Kovalic



silicon sorcery

Everybody Into the Pool

by Johnny Wilson

Pools of Radiance: Ruins of Myth Drannor & Magical Inventories

I am probably the worst DM with regard to keeping track of magic items. I love creating them, and I'm positively ecstatic whenever adventurers try to use them in both typical and unusual ways. I particularly like the challenge of trying to figure out what one magic item is going to do when confronted with another item, magical field, or spell. I love describing the effects of magic when adventurers use the items, and I love the look on a player's face whenever she discovers exactly what an item does and how easily it could backfire on her when used improperly.

Campaigns always progressed quite smoothly whenever the party only had a few magic items between them and when they were used fairly regularly. We would all remember what the items did and smile knowingly as Lord Pewtyr would wave the Medallion of Myzzrim to invoke its *charm monster* ability. Everyone would hold their collective breaths as I rolled the saving throw for the monster and described the result.

Problems would occur when Eklectic the Incompetent would suddenly look up from his character sheet and exclaim, "I've got the *glass stag* we looted from the swamp hag's hut. I use it against the direwolf." Oh, yeah—the *glass stag*. I remember that—part of the swamp hag's treasure. Uh ... what did that thing do again? Did it summon a huge stag that would spear the direwolf with his antlers or did it give the user the strength of a large mammal? Did speaking the command word cause the speaker to grow antlers?

At that point, I had two choices. First, I could slow the session to a crawl while I frantically thumbed through my folders for the notes on the swamp hag's hut in order to find the exact powers and abilities of the *glass stag* artifact. Second, I could improvise the capabilities of the *glass stag* and keep things moving—even if it proved to be a less powerful (or more powerful) item than the one I originally designed. Neither solution was completely satisfying, but I found over the years that the second one caused fewer problems in the long run. I also tried a different solution—sort of a fire-and-forget approach. I would spout off all the information on a magic item and expect the adventurer to copy it all down for future reference. This generally worked, but it took away those delightful moments when the adventurer was trying to figure out how it worked,

POOL OF EXPERIENCE

The old trading city of Phlan had a problem: A dragon named Tyranthraxus and a group of orcs had conquered it and destroyed its economy. The survivors believed that the trouble came from an ancient evil pool below the city. By reclaiming parts of the city, step-by-step, a party of adventurers closed in on this evil Pool of Radiance and the fierce dragon Tyranthraxus.

what it did, and most importantly, whether it was safe to use or not.

I polled some of my colleagues on how they handle magic items within a campaign and found that *Dragon Magazine* Editor-in-Chief Dave Gross uses index cards in a file. Each weapon or artifact has its own number and index card with all of the vital data on it. When in doubt, he could just thumb through the file and know exactly what a particular item was capable of. *Dungeon Magazine* Editor-in-Chief Chris Perkins keeps a running list of items and updates his campaign notes every couple of weeks.

When we started looking at *Pool of Radiance: Ruins of Myth Drannor* from SSI, though, I found another logical solution to this problem. From now on, I'm using the same system as the software designers: a spreadsheet. For every magic item in the game, the spreadsheet lists several things: an identifying number, name, descriptive phrase, whether the item is generic or unique, the location where it is found, the point at which the item is used up, special animation sequences, special traits, its value, and extra checkpoints on how it was to be designed, animated, and programmed into the computer game. It's a great solution for DMs like me who have access to a laptop, or even DMs who update the spreadsheets on their desktop PC and reprint them each week. With this process, there's no more thumbing through folders for your notes; you just check the spreadsheet and keep playing.

POOL OF EXTRAVAGANCE

I mention the handling of magic items because *Pool of Radiance: Ruins of Myth Drannor*, a new PC game that features the new edition of the D&D rules, returns to the scene of the first "gold box" adventure (the first serious adaptation of the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons game for personal computers like the Apple II, Commodore 64, and Amiga) and is replete with magic weapons and artifacts. In one sense, it's poetic justice that it has so many artifacts, since the original *Pool of Radiance* was followed by *Curse of the Azure Bonds*. What was the first thing to happen in the introduction to *Curse of the Azure Bonds*? All of your best magic items were taken away from you. Sure, it was a lazy man's way to balance the game, but people like myself and Scorpia (still the best computer roleplaying reviewer in the world) have never forgiven the SSI folks for that. Now SSI is making restitution. The preliminary list for the new game has over 120 different items. About thirty of these are fairly specialized artifacts that are meant to advance the game's plot. The rest are useful weapons and equipment that should increase your chances of survival.

GLOW LITTLE DUNGEON

We're not sure how many locales would have this freshly mopped, shiny floor, but every new computer game has to show off its reflection algorithms somewhere, doesn't it?

Here are my favorite half-dozen magic items from *Pool of Radiance: Ruins of Myth Drannor*. While we're waiting for the game to be finished, there's plenty of value in slipping some of these into your pen-and-paper campaigns.

1. **Deathbane.** This staff is dedicated to the elven sect of Mystra. Deathbane

In *Pool of Radiance: Ruins of Myth Drannor*, the pool beneath the city has been reactivated and tendrils of undeath have started emerging from its waters. Elminster sent an earlier crew of powerful adventurers to Myth Drannor with the Gauntlets of Moander. They were to destroy the source of the Pool of Radiance. Naturally, the initial plan goes awry, and your party must pick up the slack.

has 1d8 charges and can be used to cast *cure critical wounds* (4d8+13 points of damage) or the *resurrection* spell. Each casting uses one charge.

2. **Borea's Blood.** This unique item is a blue sliver of ice that can be used as a wand. Considering its appearance, make it a *wand of ice storm* (5d6 points of damage) and give it 1d12 charges.

3. **Magic Snakeskin Boots.** These shoes might not sound sexy, but they protect the wearer from reptilian attacks. They sure wouldn't hurt in a world with a giant guardian naga, would they?

4. **Stone Mouth.** Speaking of that giant guardian naga, here's an artifact you can get from one in the game (if you're smart). This necklace has a stone head which features an open mouth. It enables you to communicate with gargoyles and margoyles.

5. **Lamp of Darkness.** Since this perverse, reverse lamp covers its user in a 10-foot sphere of impenetrable magical darkness, you might suspect that the magic behind it is drow sorcery. You would be correct. Nonetheless, you never know when you might want to be completely unobserved within the shadows of a drow fortress, do you?

6. **Sacred Staff of Sunlight.** Since you've already guessed that there are going to be lots of drow and undead in *Pool of Radiance: Ruins of Myth Drannor*, don't be surprised that one of your most effective weapons could be this staff that shoots a beam of sunlight at your enemies. It won't do a thing to most monsters, but it should do 5d6 points of damage to each drow or undead it zaps.

UP A TREE

There are two kinds of "elves" in the new Pool of Radiance: Ruins of Myth Drannor *game. I'd prefer to run into the ones who live here rather than one who is carrying a* lamp of darkness.

POOL OF POSSIBILITIES

Frankly, I haven't had a chance to play *Pool of Radiance: Ruins of Myth Drannor* as of yet. I've seen some great demos in which the larger 3D figures display some very graceful animation. I like the way the new edition of the D&D rules have been integrated into the game (though not all character classes are represented, due to the heavy emphasis of the computer game on specific combat animation). I'm thrilled with the emphasis on drow and undead, the villains we love to hate. I like Elminster's cameo appearance in the plot set-up (see sidebar). I don't know how the story will come out, but I know this: From now on, all of my campaigns will have a running spreadsheet inventory of magic artifacts and weapons. It's not every game that inspires me to change my way of DMing before I ever face a monster. D

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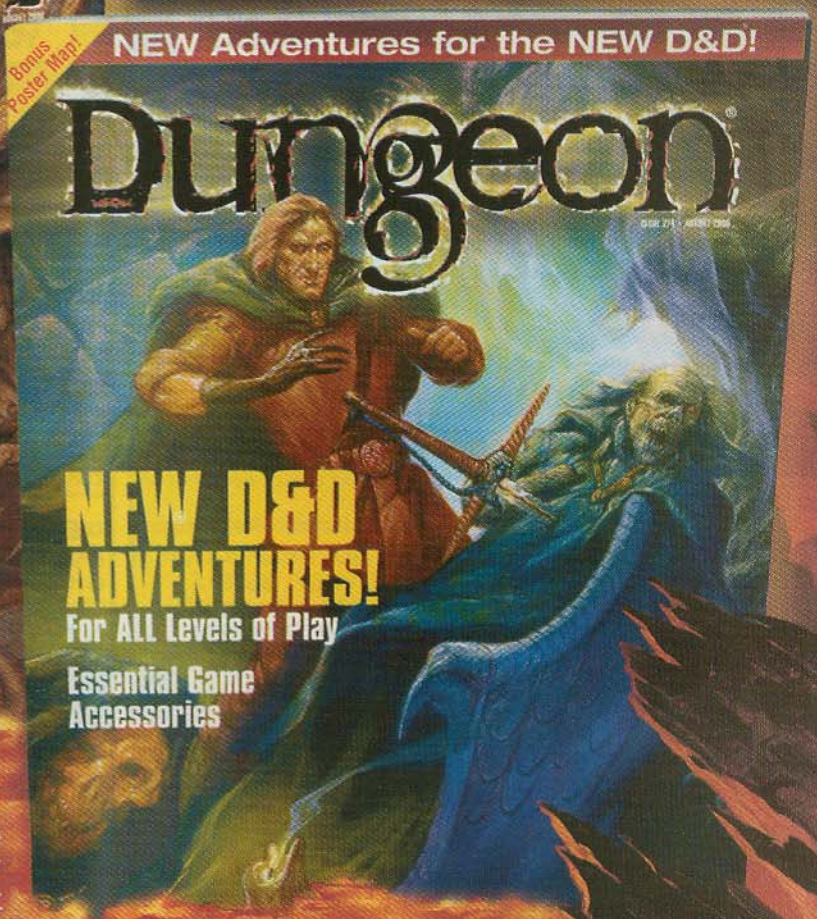

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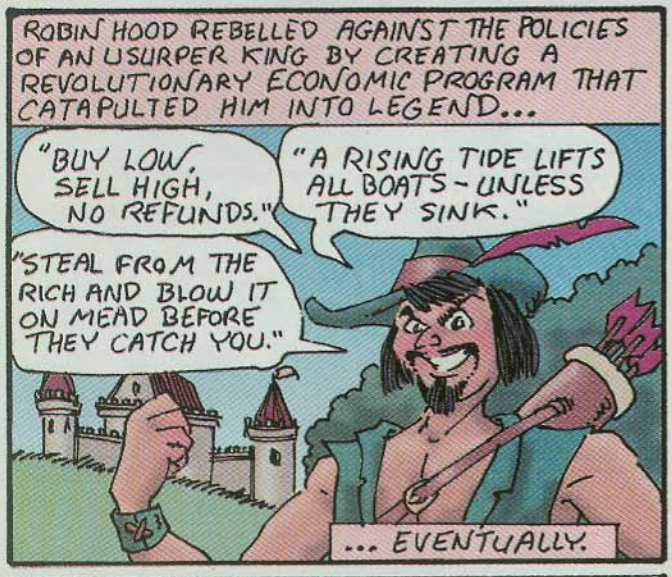
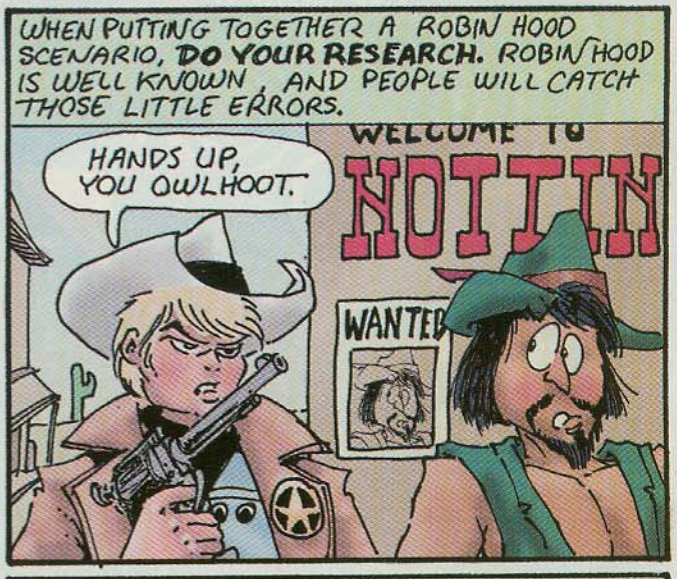
WHAT'S NEW
WITH PHIL AND DIXIE

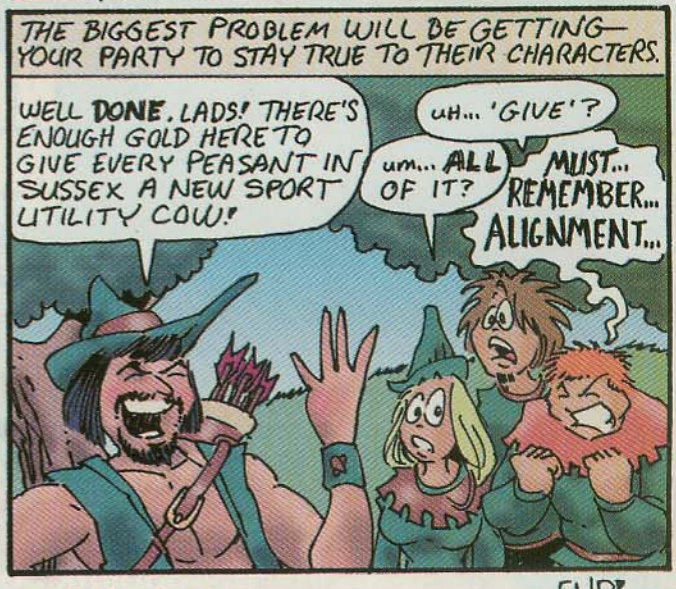
HEY GANG! OUR CHOICE OF SUBJECTS TODAY ARE ROBIN HOOD— OR THE RULE CHANGES IN DED'S THIRD EDITION! NOW SINCE NOTHING IS MORE EXCTING THAN TALKING ABOUT NEW RULES...
IDIOT!

ROBIN HOOD IS ONE OF THE MOST RECOGNIZABLE CHARACTERS IN THE WORLD! A MAJOR ICONOGRAPHIC ROMANCE FIGURE! JUST THE THOUGHT OF A WHOLE BUNCH OF BEEFY GUYS IN TIGHT LEATHER OUTFITS HIDDEN IN THE FOREST WITH MAID MARION...
DIX— YOU'RE DROOLING.
©Foglio-00


ROBIN HOOD REBELLED AGAINST THE POLICIES OF AN USURPER KING BY CREATING A REVOLUTIONARY ECONOMIC PROGRAM THAT CATAPULTED HIM INTO LEGEND...
"BUY LOW, SELL HIGH, NO REFUNDS."
"A RISING TIDE LIFTS ALL BOATS - UNLESS THEY SINK."
"STEAL FROM THE RICH AND BLOW IT ON MEAD BEFORE THEY CATCH YOU."
... EVENTUALLY.


WHEN PUTTING TOGETHER A ROBIN HOOD SCENARIO, DO YOUR RESEARCH. ROBIN HOOD IS WELL KNOWN, AND PEOPLE WILL CATCH THOSE LITTLE ERRORS.
HANDS UP, YOU OWLHOOT.
WELCOME TO
NOTTIN
WANTED

CONVERSELY, THE ROBIN HOOD CONCEPT IS ONE THAT IS EASILY TRANSFERRED INTO ANY GENRE IMAGINABLE.
OH WOE! THE HEMULAK HAVE ABSORBED ALL OF OUR BLEEN PASTE!
FEAR NOT, GOOD VOONS! HERE IS YOUR BLEEN PASTE - AND A GLOWING FOBNOB FOR DESSERT! COURTESY OF THE HEMULAK! HA HA!
OUR SPAWN WILL MICTURATE!! THANK YOU, FNORBLE HOOD!


THE BIGGEST PROBLEM WILL BE GETTING YOUR PARTY TO STAY TRUE TO THEIR CHARACTERS.
WELL DONE, LADS! THERE'S ENOUGH GOLD HERE TO GIVE EVERY PEASANT IN SUSSEX A NEW SPORT UTILITY COW!
uH... 'GIVE'?
um... ALL OF IT?
MUST... REMEMBER... ALIGNMENT...

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END!

GIVE US A PIECE.

Check out these August events!

August 4, 6:00 PM (PDT)
Death of a Dragon
With author **Ed Greenwood**

August 8, 6:00 PM (PDT)
Magic® Deck Deconstruction
Deconstructing Worlds Decks
With former Pro Tour player **Randy Buehler**

August 18, 6:00 PM (PDT)
The *D&D® Adventure Game*
With designers **Jonathan Tweet** and **Jason Carl**

August 22, 6:00 PM (PDT)
Wizards Profiles
With Wizards CEO **Peter Adkison**

August 25, 6:00 PM (PDT)
Pokémon TCG Gym: Heroes
With R&D's **Mike Elliott**

August 27, 6:00 PM (PDT)
Sage Advice Live!
D&D Conversion Issues
With ***Dragon's***
Skip "The Sage" Williams

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